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# KALIDASA:

HIS PERIOD, PERSONALITY & POETRY

BY

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## FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION.

I am sending this book and its companion volume (*The Genius of Kalidasa*) which is to be published soon into the wide world, though I am well aware of their many defects and imperfections. My aim is to do some pioneer work in a neglected field. The interpretation of Indian literature by Indian scholarship has not yet begun in an adequate manner and measure. Such work is the acid test of the vain and vaunted Indian patriotism of to-day. I desired to gather together a syndicate of scholars and publish a Variorum Edition of Kalidasa. My noble friend Mr. T. K. Balasubrahmanya Iyer, who has dedicated his life and wealth to the cause of the expansion of Indian learning and Sanskrit culture, has been eager to publish it. But my official pre-occupations and the professional pre-occupation of my friends who proposed to co-operate with me in doing such a work have stood in the way.

The Sanskrit language is now under a cloud. But the clouds pass and the sun remains. It is the Sanskrit language that is the real linking element in Indian culture. मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव । If Federated India is to succeed in external life it must get federated in its inner nature by means of the unifying power of Sanskrit. Further, the entire modern age need it as surely as a sick man needs a physician. His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore who is an embodiment of royal virtues and Indian culture has well said: "Sanskrit learning embodies a culture, a discipline, a type of humanism, which no other learning old or new, dead or living, can present to our age." I have written this work not only with the object of interpreting Kalidasa but also with the object of winning the love of modern India and of the modern age to the Sanskrit language and literature and to the Indian culture.

Kalidasa, like Valmiki and Vyasa, is one of the incarnations of the national genius at its best. He has summed up the entirety of Indian life in an inimitable way. We can well say of him as Goethe said of *Sakuntala*:

“Wouldst thou the young year’s blossoms  
                                     and the fruits of its decline  
 And all by which the soul is feasted,  
                                     enraptured, fed.

Would’st thou both earth and heaven in  
                                     one soul name combine,  
 I name thee, O Kalidasa! and all at once  
                                     is said.”

Madura,  
 15th March 1933. }

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI.





**KALIDASA—**

**His Period,**

**Personality and Poetry.**





## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

**T**HIS book aims at presenting within brief limits an estimate of the life and the life-work of one who was the highest expression of the Indian genius in one of its greatest epochs of self-realisation—the immortal Kalidasa. To do such a great work adequately an amplitude of power of presentation and an amplitude of canvas for presentation are equally indispensable and equally unavailable. I shall aim more at suggestiveness than at comprehensiveness in this work.

The task of expounding Kalidasa's works from a grammatical and metrical and expository point of view has been done well by many great

commentators during many centuries. Mr. A. W. Ryder has said well in his book on Kalidasa's works: "No European nation can compare with India in critical devotion to its own literature." Of them all Mallinatha Suri is the greatest and best in point of learning, scholarship, brevity, clearness and various other great qualities. He does not belong to the group of commentators who are described with characteristic caustic humour by Pope when he says:

"Lo! Commentators each dark passage shun  
And show their farthing candles to the Sun."

He never shirks any difficulty but throws abundant light everywhere.

But the historic and comparative and æsthetic methods of exposition and appraisement have yet to be applied to Indian literature and especially to Kalidasa. It is only by the application of such methods that we can properly appreciate not only the genius of a poet but his special excellences and his roots in the racial life.

The æsthetic aspect of art—its power to enkindle a pervasive and intense and all-absorbing feeling of delight—was well understood in our country and was analysed and exposed to

the searchlight of the keen and analytic and at the same time synthetic and sympathetic imagination of the Indian racial mind in the course of many centuries from the sage Bharata to the great aesthetician and metaphysician Appayya Dikshita who lived barely three centuries ago. I have discussed the development of Indian Aesthetics at some length in my recent work on the subject.\* But no regular and systematic treatment of the works of great individual poets or the great periods of poetical self-expression and achievement in India has as yet been given to the world. In Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka* (ध्वन्यालोक), which is one of the treasures, nay scriptures, of Indian æsthetical ideas, this work has been done to some extent, or rather, the artistic and emotional possibilities of such a work have been revealed. But the other works on Aesthetics deal rather with abstract, than with applied, poetics and aesthetics.

But even more than this desideratum, is the need for applying the historical and comparative methods of study and criticism and appreciation. These are a late achievement even in the

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\* INDIAN ÆSTHETICS by Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastri B. A., B. L., Published by the Sri Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam. Price Rs. 2. 25 nP.

West and are a result of the recent advances made in history and science. The fruitfulness of such methods was discovered only in very recent times. It is a means of arriving at a reconstruction of the history of human culture. It enables the spirit of man to count the milestones left behind on the road of time. It enables man to know the growth of his own powers. This is a valuable means of acquiring courage for assaying with success our journey in the future along the road of time. Such a work has not yet been done at all in our land. The materials for such a work are ample—nay, stupendous in mass and bewildering in complexity. We have to deal not with a new or defunct or poor civilisation but with a very old and very energetic and very rich and complex civilisation. The self-expressions of the racial spirit in the course of many centuries have been numerous and are of a perplexing mass and manifoldness. To correlate the many and mighty achievements of the national spirit and to relate them to the highest achievements in literature and art and religion is a task of absorbing interest and urgent importance. The difficulty of the work is enhanced by the lack of ascertained historical data. The problems of Indian

chronology are of a very conflicting and perplexing character. The dates of birth and death of many of our master-spirits including kings and poets and saints have yet to be fixed with accuracy. Without the doing of such work, the attempt to reconstruct the past in a systematic way and to present to the modern age the mirror of the past to behold itself therein must be one foredoomed to failure.

The late Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer, who was one of the leaders of Indian life and thought in his time and whose critical vigilance and acuteness no sophistry could lull and from which no real and radical defects could escape, said well, so long ago as 1908, in his introduction to Pandit Vidya Vinoda R. Krishnamachariar's *Meghasandesha Vimarsa*: "The writers are mere expositors of the meanings of words and phrases and of grammatical or other peculiarities. They rarely deviate into the more difficult field of criticism of poetic beauty, the description of scenes, the delineations of character, and the weaving of the plot. Except occasional hints thrown out in the course of verbal annotations, they never depart from their time-honoured practice and try to seize the secret of the poet's



power of blending literary expression with the fine frenzy of the imagination." Such a work has been waiting to be done and is attempted to be done to some extent in this work. My aim in the first volume is to present Kalidasa's times and trace the sources of his genius and give an account of his works from the angles of vision referred to above. In my second volume I shall describe the genius of Kalidasa with reference to the individual and racial and universal elements in his poetry and deal with him as the poet of Nature and Beauty and Love and as poet and as dramatist, and show his ideals of boyhood and manhood and womanhood and his social and political and religious concepts, and describe also his portraiture of Indian civilisation and his influences on Indian poetry and life and on universal literature.

Mr. A. W. Ryder has said in his work on Kalidasa: "It is surely true that every nation is the best judge of its own literature." This is my justification and my excuse for writing this work. We Indians have left this work undone for a long time and are bound to do it for self-realisation and self-expression and also for the proper understanding of us by the world at large

and the enrichment of universal life and thought. Quite recently Mr. J. D. Anderson said: "Criticism in India lags behind the country's literary achievements in general." Rabindranath Tagore has, fortunately for us and for the world, done this work, though not in a systematic way and with reference to all the works of any particular poet. Literature has been well said to be the brain of humanity. It is the treasury of the racial experience. True and appreciative and interpretative criticism when it is worthy of the poet will take fire by contact with the poet's Promethean fire and will contain an element of true creativeness within itself. A well-known Sanskrit verse goes the length of saying that the poet is the parent of the bride—Poesy, but it is the critic who is the bridegroom of the bride. Criticism reveals the essential truth and beauty and joy of literature as literature reveals the essential truth and beauty and joy of life. If the critic has half the gladness that the poet's brain must know, such harmonious sanity from his lips would flow that he should listen to him as it listens to the poet.

If any of our classical poets deserve such an approach and such a study and such an

exposition it is Kalidasa. I hope and wish and pray that the following pages may justify such a claim. It they do not, the fault is mine and not that of the immortal poet who is the poet of all times and climes and of all minds and moods. I cannot describe him better than in the words of introduction by Palgrave in his *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*: "Like the fabled fountain of the Azores, but with a more various power, the magic of this Art can confer on each period of life its appropriate blessing: on early years experience, on maturity calm, on age youthfulness. Poetry gives treasures, more golden than gold, leading us in higher and healthier ways than those of the world and interpreting to us the lesson of Nature. But she speaks best for herself. Her true accents, if the plan has been executed with success, may be heard throughout the following pages."





## CHAPTER II.

### **The Place of Kalidasa in Life and Literature.**

**I**T is thus a privilege and an obligation of Indian critical talent to take up Kalidasa for historical and comparative study and æsthetic exposition. It is one of the means of creating or at least intensifying the racial self-consciousness which is the only means of stimulating racial originality in the future and thus enriching universal culture by means of the re-stimulated Indian culture. Has not the reproach of sterility of mind been laid, and rightly laid, at our doors? Have we not become a beggar-nation in more ways than one? Should we not save and redeem ourselves from imminent national bankruptcy of mind and heart and soul? To vary the figure and use a Kalidasian idea, should not the blossomless Asoka tree of Indian Literature and Art feel

the touch of the soft and decorated foot of the lovely maiden whose name<sup>1</sup> is *Kalidasa Kavita* (Kalidasa's Poesy)?

It is not proper or permissible in this work to urge a strong plea for the intensive study of Sanskrit literature by Indians. Professor Max Muller expressed its value to the world at large thus in his well-known words. "And, if I were to ask myself, from what literature, we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semite race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human life, a life, not for this life only but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India." Emerson has said in his works which are as redolent of India as of the sweet sanity and serenity of his own soul: "If (the Veda) is sublime as heat and light and breathless ocean, it contains every religious sentiment, all the grand ethics, which visit in turn each noble poetic mind...There is no remedy for musty self-conceited English —made up of fictitious trifles, hating ideas—

like Orientalism. That astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once there is thunder he never heard, light he never saw, and power which trifles with time and space."

I do not pursue this aspect further here, though the enchantment and fascination of it are great. But to us the study of our literature is an even deeper want and a more intimate concern. Sister Nivedita said in one of her many inspired utterances during the many rapt and elevated moods and moments of her noble and nobly dedicated life: "There is no voice like that of Art to reach the people. A song, a picture, these are the fiery cross that reaches all the tribes and make them one.....Not only to utter India to the world but also to voice India to herself, this is the mission of Art, divine mother of the ideal, when it descends to clothe itself in forms of realism." It is by the study of the best Sanskrit literature that India can attain true and vital self-consciousness and hear the music of her own voice and behold the beauty of her own face in the mirror of Art. To the world at large Sanskrit literature may be and is a corrective, a remedy, a supplement, a secondary or primary illumina-

tion. But to us it is a matter of life and death. Let me quote Sister Nivedita again as I desire to fortify my view—which perhaps may be unrelished in this age of insincerities and shams and unashamed borrowings and wholesale denationalisations—by the views of critical and competent and sympathetic and inspired outsiders and observers: “At each step, then, the conquest must be twofold. On this side, something to be added to the world’s knowledge and on that, an utterance to be given *for the first time*, for India to herself. This is the battle that opens before the next generation. On our fighting a good fight, the very existence, it may be of the next, depends. Our national defence, is become, perforce, a national assault.” The only words to which I demur in this noble passage are “for the first time.” India was voiced to herself by herself supremely well in times of yore. The question for our emergent consideration is how to fit ourselves again for that noble work for achieving our own regeneration along with universal welfare and enrichment.

This exaltation of Sanskrit literature does not at all or in any way mean, an attitude of

contempt or neglect of the great literatures in the beautiful vernaculars of India. This idea is one of the evil results of our recent political follies and vices. Every linguistic group in India must prize and study its lingual masterpieces, because the future contribution of India to her own greatness and the welfare of the world must necessarily be through the chief vernaculars of India. But he who thinks that he can achieve the future enrichment of the vernacular literatures without an extensive and intensive study of Sanskrit is the most deluded of mortals. If Sanskrit literature is the corrective and the remedy and the supplementary illumination of universal culture, the filial vernacular literatures cannot afford to rebel and to sever their affiliation. The rest of Asia knows and feels its debt of inspiration to Sanskrit. Europe and America have recently realised and testified to its value. But it has been reserved for the short-sighted iconoclasts and vernacular-worshippers in India to cast the stones of verbal abuse at the greatest literature in the world.

I need not accentuate and express all the implications of the above discussion in its bear-



ing on Kalidasa's place in life and literature-He is one of the shining lights of Sanskrit literature. He was the summation of Indian culture in one of the most exalted periods of triumphant self-realisation. His works form a treasury of the truest and the highest Indian ideals of life here and hereafter. If we wish to know the heights of life and super-life to which the authentic voice of India can reach, we must study again and again, with loving attention and minute scrutiny and reverential affection the works of Kalidasa. It is not my purpose here to refer to his excellences as a poet and a dramatist or to describe his portraiture of India and her eternal and immemorial ideals. I shall assay that task, whether with good or ill success, in the ensuing pages. What I wish to urge here is the high place occupied by Kalidasa in universal life and literature. If Sanskrit literature is a valuable element in universal life and literature and is not merely a valuable but also a vital element in Indian life and literature, the place of Kalidasa in life and literature would be too clear to need any expression or exposition, elaboration or vindication. By a study of his works and his genius

the rest of the world will be enabled to achieve its true progress by attaining to a synthetic vision of life and having a true concept of that idealised and transfigured life which alone is the crown and the consummation of our petty wordly life otherwise so full of fruitless toil and unfraternal strife, while India will rise to a higher and truer and clearer vision of herself as a whole and self-conscious unity, dowered with eternal youth and facing the "sunrise of nations." For Kalidasa is India and India is Kalidasa. Nay: may I not go further and say with Mr. Benoy Kumar Sirkar: "Nobody understands Asia who does not understand Kalidasa—the spirit of Asia"? Indeed, India is the heart of Asia and Kalidasa is the heart of India.





## CHAPTER III

### **Kalidasa's Predecessors.**

**I**T is a new and pleasant task to trace the spiritual and artistic ancestry of Kalidasa. Though in the case of each great poet there is a special and peculiar and underived and incommunicable element of individual greatness, he derives strength and nourishment and inspiration from the great poets and seers of the past, and his greatness as well his value to the race in which he is born and to the world at large can never be fully and adequately understood unless we know his relation to his predecessors.

There is not much evidence in his works to show that he was fired by the wonderful poetic concepts and descriptions found in the Rig-Vedic poetry, though he speaks of the Vedas in terms

of the highest reverence. But he seems to have known and accepted the Upanishadic religious ideas. Though we do not see in him those unconscious or conscious frequent borrowings of the immortal and perfect symbolism and expression of the Upanishadic poetic ideas which we see in the *Srimad Bhagavata*, we certainly find Upanishadic ideas and passages here and there in his works and see that he has been influenced by what is wrongly called the eclectism and what should be rightly called the synthetic vision of Upanishadic seers. We have also a clear indication in his works showing how he had assimilated the crescendo of synthetic doctrine which is seen in parts in the *Six Darsanas* but which really forms one synthetic and integral whole. I shall describe these aspects fully when dealing in my second volume with Kalidasa's religion. But I shall indicate here a few facts in so far as they bear on the question of Kalidasa's mental ancestry. The following verses show how he was acquainted and in sympathy with the great Upanishadic teachings and the *Six Darsanas*.

प्रलयस्थितिसर्गाणां एकः कारणतां गतः ॥

Kumarasambhava II. 6.

प्रत्यक्षोऽप्यपरिच्छेद्यो मद्यादिर्महिमा तव ।  
आप्तवागनुमानाभ्यां साध्यं त्वां प्रति का कथा ॥

Raghuvamsa X, 28.

त्वामामनन्ति प्रकृतिं पुरुषार्थप्रवर्तिनीम् ।  
तद्दर्शिनमुदासीनं त्वामेव पुरुषं विदुः ॥

Kumarasambhava II. 13.

कारणमाप्तवाचो बुद्धेरिवाव्यक्तमुदाहरन्ति ॥

Raghuvamsa XIII. 60.

योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजां

Do. I. 8.

अपरः प्राणिधानयोग्यया मरुतः पञ्च शरीरगोचरान् ।

Do. VIII. 19.

न च योगविधेर्नवेतरः स्थिरधोरा परमात्मदर्शनात् ।

Do VIII. 22.

The above are a few of the many stanzas in his poems showing how much he accepted and assimilated from the great saints who composed the Samkhya Sutras, Yoga Sutras, and the Vedanta Sutras. The *Vikramorvasiya* begins with the well-known line

“वेदान्तेषु यमाहुरेकपुरुषं व्याप्य स्थितं रोदसी  
यस्मिन्नीश्वर इत्यनन्यविषयः शब्दो यथार्थाक्षरः ॥”

which is clearly reminiscent of the Svetasvatara Upanishad. The third line in the verse clearly refers to the Dahara Vidya.

अन्तर्यश्च मुमुक्षुभिर्नियमितप्राणादिभिर्मृग्यते ।

In the interests of the brevity of this work I do not pursue these citations further.

Kalidasa's reverence to Manu is profound and complete (See Raghuvamsa I, 17 ; XIV. 67). In all his works he shows the great influence which Manu's immortal work had on all later leaders of thought in India. He refers often to the sacraments as described in the Indian Dharma Sastras.

Kalidasa's debt to Valmiki is heavy and manifold and handsomely acknowledged in his works. In the Raghuvamsa, he says :—

अथवा कृतवाग्द्वारे वंशेऽस्मिन्पूर्वसूरिभिः ।

मणा वज्रतमुत्कीर्णे सूत्रस्यवास्ति मे गतिः ॥ 1. 4.

निषादविद्धाण्डजददर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ॥

XIV. 70.

Not only was the idea of sending a cloud as a messenger suggested by the sending of Hanuman as a messenger in the *Ramayana*. Sakuntala is full of ideas and incidents suggested by the *Ramayana*. Kalidasa took from it the idea of using a ring as a token of recognition, Dushyanta's pursuing a deer, and helping sages

against demons, the sending of Vidhushaka to take his place for a while at the capital, the sending away of Sakuntala while she is pregnant, Sakuntala's being taken by a goddess, the protection of Sakuntala by a sage during pregnancy and after childbirth, Dushyanta's getting into the car of Indra driven by Matali, reunion with Sakuntala, Sakuntala's blaming her fate for her misfortunes, and the hinted greatness of Dushyanta's son. In the Raghu-vamsa the idea of bringing in a deity of Ayodhya was obviously suggested by the introduction of the deity of Lanka in the Sundara-kanda of the Ramayana. There are also internal indications in Kalidasa's poem showing the influence of the elder poet. Valmiki says:—

मेघाभिक्रमा परिसंपन्ती समादिता भानि बलाकपङ्क्तिः ।  
वातावधूनावरणैर्ण्डरीकी लम्बेव माला रचिताम्बरस्य ॥

This fine poetic idea has obviously suggested Kalidasa's verse :

नूनमावद्धमालाः सविध्यन्ते नयनसुभगं खे भवन्ते बलाकाः ।

Meghasandesa 1. 9.

Valmiki says :—

महत्सु शृङ्गेषु महीधराणां

विश्रम्य विश्रम्य पुनः प्रयान्ति ।

Kalidasa brings out the same idea thus,

खिन्नः खिन्नः शिखरिषु पदं न्यस्य गन्तासि यत्र ।

*Ibid* I. 13.

Valmiki says :—

सुगतामर्दविच्छिन्नाः स्वर्गस्त्रीहारमोक्तिकाः ।

पतन्तीवाकुला दिशु नायधाराः समन्ततः ॥

This idea is finely worked out in his own way by Kalidasa :—

या वः काले वहति स किलोद्गारमुच्चैर्विमानै-

मुक्ताजालप्रथितमलकं कामिनीवाभ्रवृन्दम् ॥ *Ibid* 1. 63.

In innumerable phrases and illustrations and ideas we see Valmiki's influence on Kalidasa. Kalidasa, like Valmiki, describes perfect manhood in the opening of his great poem *Raghuvamsa* and then proceeds to describe great men who were incarnations of those ideals. The following few parallel passages are given by way of illustration.

Valmiki

चेणुभिर्मरुतोद्धूतैः कूजन्तमिव  
कीवकैः ।

( *सुन्दरकाण्ड*, 56. 14. )

Kalidasa

सकीचकैर्मरुतपूर्णरन्ध्रैः  
कूजद्भिरागादितवंशकुल्यम् ।

प्रदक्षिणावर्तशिखस्तवहाटक-  
सन्निभः हविस्तत्प्रतिजग्राह

प्रदक्षिणार्चिर्हविरग्निराददे ।



पावकः स्वयमुत्थितः ।

( युद्धकाण्ड, 80. 10 ).

चमूं प्रकर्षन्महतीं ।

( सुन्दरकाण्ड, 37. 18 .

स सेनां महतीं कर्षन् ।

That Kalidasa was an admirer of the Gita and was deeply influenced by it is equally clear. The following lines of his verse are full of the influence of the Gita.

Gita

Kalidasa

अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः  
पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ XV. 18.

✓ हरिर्यथैकः पुरुषोत्तमः स्मृतः ।  
Raghuvamsa III. 49.

यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते  
सोपमा स्मृता । VI. 19.

निवातनिष्कम्पमिव प्रदीपम् ।  
Kumarasambhava VI. 48.

ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसा-  
त्कुरुते तथा ॥

IV. 37.

निवातनिष्कम्पतया  
Raghuvamsa XIII. 52.  
इतरो दहने स्वकर्मणां ववृते  
ज्ञानमयेन वह्निना ।

Do. VIII. 20.

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः सम-  
लोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ॥

XIV. 24.

रघुरप्यजयद्गुणत्रयं प्रकृतिस्थं  
समलोष्टकाञ्चनः ॥

Do. VIII. 21.

आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।  
प्रयाणकाले मनसाचलेन भक्त्या  
युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।

तमसः परमापदव्ययं पुरुषं  
योगसमाधिना रघुः ।

Do. VIII. 24.

ध्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक्  
स ते परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥

VIII. 9 and 10.

नानवातत्रयात्वर्यं वर्त एव अनवातमवातवर्यं न ते किञ्चन  
च कर्मणि । II. 22. प्रियते । लोकानुग्रह एवै-  
को हेतुस्ते जन्मकर्मणोः ।

Do. X. 31.

In fact he expressly refers to Gita Chap. X Verse 25 when he says about the Himalaya.

स्थाने त्वां स्यावरात्मनं विष्णुमाहुस्तथा हि ते ।

Kumarasambhava VI. 67.

Even more than these and other passages the spirit of the Gita shines out in his poems. Its great affirmations of the immortality of the soul, of the supremacy and grace of God, of His many manifestations and incarnations and of the harmony and synthesis of Karma and Yoga and Bhakti and Jnana had fired Kālīdāsa's heart and imagination and appear frequently in his works.

I desire to make here a further and special and detailed reference to the indications in his work showing that he knew and admired the great Vedānta Sūtras of Vyāsa. In

प्रलयस्थितिसर्गाणामेकः कारणतां गतः ।

Kumarasambhava II. 6.

he refers to the well-known Sutra

जन्माद्यस्य यतः (I. 1, 2)

In तासां त्वं प्रभवा गिरां (Kumarasambhava II. 12) and in आप्तवागनुमानाभ्यां साध्यं त्वां प्रति का कथा (Raghuvamsa X. 28) he refers to the next Sutra

शास्त्रयानित्वात् (I. 1. 3)

In the stanza त्वय्येव निपतन्त्योघाः जाह्नवीया इवाणव (Raghuvamsa X. 26) he refers to the next Sutra

तत्तु समवयान् (I. 1. 4.)

In ममैव जन्मान्तरपातकानां विपाकविस्फूर्जथुरप्रसूयः (Raghuvamsa, XIV, 62) he refers to the well-known Sutra “वैषम्यनैर्घृण्ये न सापेक्षत्वात्तथा हि दर्शयति”  
(II. 1. 34)

He was further well conversant with the Puranas. We need not concern ourselves here with the question whether all the Puranas were in existence prior to his time or not. Such a bye-discussion will draw us away from the main topic. Amara Simha, the great dictionary-maker, says that a Purana should be *Panchalakshana* (i. e. have five characteristics). Some at least of the Puranas were certainly older than Kalidasa's days. He has taken the stories of his two great epics from the Puranas. In the *Megha Sandesa* there is a clear reference to

गोपवेवस्य त्रिष्णोः (Vishnu who had the appearance of a shepherd. I have no doubt that Kalidasa was influenced by the Mahabharata and the Puranas and the Bhagavata though in a less degree than by the Ramayana.

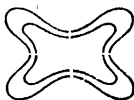
I shall in a later chapter show he belonged to an epoch when aggressive and triumphant Hinduism had asserted itself successfully as against Buddhism. But in his age the influence of Buddhistic ideas and ideals and manners and institutions had not gone out of the land altogether. The respect shown to the *Parivrajaka* in the *Malavikagnimitra* and the evident sympathy with which is described the story in *Raghuvamsa* about Dilipa offering himself as a sacrifice to the lion (recalling the famous story dramatised later in *Nagananda*) show the lingering influence of outstanding Buddhistic ideas.

At the same time, it is clear as I shall show presently, that Kalidasa preceded Kumarila Bhatta and Sankara. It seems to me that the noble and synthetic theism of Kalidasa and his concepts of *Sadhana* and of *Moksha* certainly influenced them to some

extent, though Sankara's original and universal intellect was peerless in its synthetic power, its bold and fearless analysis of causes, and its ascertainment and affirmation and exposition of the highest scriptural doctrines.

It only remains for me to make a reference to Bhasa and to Asvaghosha. Kalidasa refers with respect to Bhasa and Saumilla and Kavi-putra in his *Malavikagnimitra*. There is a controversy now going on as to the genuineness of the works of Bhasa which have been given to the world by that late lamented veteran scholar Pandit T. Ganapathi Sastriar of Trivandrum. I do not wish to enter into that discussion here. It is likely that Kalidasa was influenced by Bhasa's poetic genius and dramatic method. But his borrowings from all quarters were assimilated by him and became a portion of himself and do not in any way detract from the originality of his genius or of his achievement. As regards Asvaghosha's *Buddhacharita* and the occasional resemblances of ideas and expressions in it and in *Raghuvamsa* and *Kumarasambhava* of Kalidasa, it is enough to state here that we are in the misty realms of guess and conjecture. Some of the stock ideas

and expressions had already become current coin bearing the royal seal of Valmiki. Hence the use of such ideas and phrases means nothing. Further, there is no reliable evidence to show that Asvaghosha preceded Kalidasa. I shall show in a later chapter that it is more likely that he succeeded Kalidasa and copied thoughts and expressions from Kalidasa.





## CHAPTER IV.

### **India in Kalidasa's time.**

**K**ALIDASA had the good fortune to be born in India in one of the centuries of her splendour and glory. It may rather be said that such a triumphant supremacy of her outer and inner life inevitably found an authentic and predestined voice in Kalidasa. I shall show later how his portraiture of a unified India from Himalaya to Cape Comorin and from sea to sea was not a mere audacious poetic passion or prophecy but was either an accomplished fact or a rational expectation from an accomplished fact. I shall show also how he had a first-hand knowledge of the country from end to end. To know Kalidasa well, we must know as she was the land in which he lived and described so lovingly and so well.

It is not necessary or proper to describe here Vedic India or Epic India. India has been the cradle and home of the people who

have been called Hindus and who described themselves as Aryas or Bharatas, though it is likely—nay certain—that they colonised various lands in Asia and abroad and though a colony from India lived for a while in Arctic regions near the North Pole in the pre-glacial epoch. During the epic period the whole of India was well-known. The Ramayana refers even to the Chera and Chola and Pandya kingdoms in the extreme south of the peninsula. Strabo says that Alexander got Indians to describe their land to him. On the strength of the information so collected Erasthenes has described India as a rhomboid. Cunningham says in his *Ancient Geography of India*: “The close agreement of the dimensions given by Alexander’s informants with the actual size of the country is very remarkable and shows that Indians at that early date of their history had a very accurate knowledge of the form and extent of their native land.”

Kalidasa’s India was a more settled and populous and flourishing land than even the India of the epic age. The impenetrable forests of the older centuries had been brought under the sway of human occupation and human rule.



We find the whole land dotted with many kingdoms. Many of the kings ruling over such kingdom are described well in the sixth canto of *Raghuvamsa* which describes the svayamvara of *Indumati*. The fourth canto of *Raghuvamsa* which describes the great world conquest of Raghu describes the various kings subjugated by the king. In it the poet refers also to the South Indian kingdoms—the regions watered by Cauveri, the Pandya kingdom whose king gave a tribute of pearls, the Kerala kingdom etc. By the world-conquest of Raghu, Kalidasa has indicated his ideal of a unified India enjoying a position of dominant suzerainty over the rest of the world. The Hindu States mentioned by him are Anga, Anupa, Avanti, Kalinga, Kamboja, Kamarupa, Kerala, Kosala, Magadha, Malaya, Mathura, Nagapura, Sumha and Vaidharbha. He describes in the same fourth canto Raghu's conquest of the bearded Persians and their cavalry and Ionians on the West of India and the Huns and the Kambhojas on the North of India and the inhabitants of Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa in the East. His ideal is summed up in the well-known word आसमुद्र-क्षितीशानां (the lords of the earth from sea to sea).

We find further from Kalidasa's poems that there were great and famous and holy cities—both capitals and temple cities—in India in that age. Kalidasa's description of Ayodhya in the sixteenth canto of *Raghuvamsa* shows his pathetic and vivid realisation of the rise and fall of great cities. In his poems he describes in loving terms such great cities as Vidisa, Ujjain, Vishala etc., and the high pitch of perfection attained therein in arts and sciences.

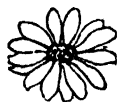
But the intensest devotion of Kalidasa in regard to his motherland is in regard to her holy mountains and her holy hermitages and her holy streams and her holy temples and other places of pilgrimage. The evident and passionate love with which he describes the Himalayas in the *Kumarasambhava* is unmistakeable. *Meghasandesha* is full of the beauty of Ramagiri and of Kailasa. The epics as well as the dramas are full of the Tapovana atmosphere. *Sakuntala* begins with Kanva's hermitage on the earth and closes with the hermitage of Maricha on the Hemakuta mountain. *Raghuvamsa* begins with Vasishtha's hermitage. *Kumarasambhava* describes the hermitage of Siva, and later on the hermitage of Uma, on the

Himalaya range. The Megha Sandesa describes the *Vetravati*, the *Nirvindhya*, the *Sipra*, the *Gandhavati*, the *Gambhira*, *Sarasvati*, the *Yamuna* and other rivers. More than any other river the Ganga caught the poet's imagination. The description of the Ganges in the tenth canto of *Kumarasambhava* is among the marvels of literature. The poet describes the Ganges in many other places in his works. So far as famous temples are concerned, he has not described any of the now famous shrines in South India, though he has described the shrine of Mahakala at Ujjain and other shrines in North India.

As regards the flora and fauna of India, Kalidasa's poetry is full of them. The beautiful flowers of India such as the lotus, the mango blossom, the Asoka flower, the Jasmine flower, the Neelotpala flower, the *Sirisha* flower etc., the stately trees of India such as the banyan tree, the asvattha tree, the *Devadaru* (deodar) tree, the Bhurja tree, the Sala tree etc., the deer and the horse and the elephant,—in short, all the beauties of the kingdom of nature and the animal kingdom live with a perennial life in his pages.

Thus Kalidasa was not only a great poet and dramatist but was also a great patriot and lover of his motherland. He had majestic visions of her eternal loveliness and charm. He had a keen realisation of her wonderful achievements in the realms of the real and the ideal. He had superb dreams of the achieved past glories and the possible future glories of his land. At the same time he had a prophetic vision and uttered a note of warning in regard to her possible fall. But during her rise as well as during her fall his love of his land never wavered and never faltered and he deeply felt and boldly uttered that her culture was the standard and the measure of all the cultures of the world.

स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्डः ।





## CHAPTER V.

### **The Birth-place and the Birth-date of Kalidasa.**

**I**T is well-nigh impossible to fix the place of Kalidasa's birth. The most widely prevalent tradition indicates that he belonged to Benares. It has been also pointed out that his poems—specially his *Megha Sandesa*—make frequent references to Ujjain and show his love for that city. In the *Meghasandesa* (verse 1) he requests the cloud to make a detour in its long northward journey and go to Ujjain. We cannot infer from this that he was born in Ujjain. It is more likely that during his adult life he lived there and learnt to love and admire it. Mr. A. W. Ryder says: "Ujjain in the days of Vikramaditya stands worthily besides Athens, Rome, Florence and London in their great centuries." The claim has been put forward that he was a native of Bengal. But there is no proof whatever worth the name to support such a fantastic claim. Equally proved and

fantastic is the claim that he belonged to Ceylon. Dr. Bhau Daji thinks that Kalidasa was a Saraswat Brahmin. But this again is a mere wild statement. On the whole his passionately reverential poems on the Ganges seem to show that the old tradition which makes him a native of Benares contains the truth. The tradition explains also his great devotion to God Siva, though he has equal reverence for Brahma and Vishnu as well.

The date of Kalidasa is as yet one of the unsettled problems of Indian Chronology, though the question has been discussed and debated for over a century by occidental and oriental scholars. Professor Max Müller says: "It seems almost impossible to give the opinions held by various Sanskrit scholars on the date of Kalidasa or on the dates of certain works ascribed to Kalidasa, on account of their constantly varying opinions and the vague language in which they are expressed." (India, what can it teach us, p. 301, footnote). The dates assigned to him cover the vast period of two thousand years—from the 8th century B. C. to 12th century A. D. Thus the two termini of the dates assigned to Kalidasa are

even beyond the termini of the dates assigned to Sri Sankaracharya. I shall discuss here briefly the current theories and show their unacceptability and then advance my reasons for my own view.

Let me first of all take up the major and the minor limits beyond which it is absolutely impossible to go. I have shown above how Kalidasa is full of references to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Hence his date was certainly long after the date of the *Gita*. On the other hand the *Maharaman* inscription at Buddhagaya in 472 A. D., refers to Kalidasa. Further, the Aihole inscription of Pulikesi II (634 A. D.,) refers to Kalidasa. It says:

स विजयतां रविकीर्तिः

कविताश्रितकालिदासभारविकीर्तिः ।

Further, the famous Bana refers thus to Kalidasa in his introduction to *Harshacharita*.

निर्गतासु न वा कस्य कालिदासस्य सूक्तिषु ।

प्रीतिर्मधुरसान्द्रासु मञ्जरीष्विव जायते ॥

The *Harshacharita* describes the greatness of king Harshavardhana of Kanya Kubja

(Kanouj) who was the patron of the poet. The life of the same king, as a contemporary potentate, is described also by the Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang who travelled in India from 629 to 645 A. D. Bana thus belonged to the first half of the seventh century A. D. Dandin quotes in his *Kavyadarsa* the verse लक्ष्म लक्ष्मीं तनोति (Sakuntala I, 20). Bhavabhuti also refers to Sakuntala in his *Malatimadhava*. Though he calls it an Itihasa story, he obviously refers to Kalidasa's play. He belonged to the 8th century A. D. We may therefore reject at once the stories and legends that seem to connect the immortal Kalidasa with king Bhoja who lived in the 11th century A. D. In a later Chapter I shall show that it was Parimala Kalidasa who was attached to king Bhoja's court. I have dealt with this matter in my Tamil work on *Bhojacharitra*. In his essay on Kalidasa Dr. Bhau Daji thinks that the tradition which assigns Kalidasa to Vikrama's court and the tradition which assigns Kalidasa to Bhoja's court could be reconciled by assuming that Vikrama also was known as Bhoja. But there are no grounds for such an assumption and there is no need for it, though it is not unlikely



that there were several Bhojas as well as several Vikramas, at Ujjain. It seems to be clear that it was not the immortal Kalidasa that had anything to do with the court of Bhoja who ruled at Ujjain and Dhara in the 11th century A. D.

The author of *Gudavaho*, a Pratik poem of the eighth century refers to Kalidasa as the author of *Raghuvamsa* (*Raghukara*). Nriptatunga (9th century) refers to Kalidasa, Bharavi and Magha as classics. In the same century the Jain Sakatayana quotes in his Amoghavritti the words *Appricchasva priyasakham* from Kalidasa's *Meghasandesa*, I, 12. Verses from *Meghasandesa* were used for *Samasyapoorana* (verse composition) by Jivasena in his *Parsvabhyyudaya* soon after saka 735. (काव्यं व्यधायि परि-वेष्टितमेघदूतं). In the second half of 9th century Vamana refers in his *Kavyalankarasutra* Vritti to the use of the word *Asa* in *Kumarasambhava*, I, 35. Hemachandra who belonged to the twelfth century refers to the use of this word in his work. Bhoja's *Sarasvatikantabharana* and Kshirasvami's commentary on *Amarakosa* which belonged to the eleventh century A. D. abound in quotations from Kalidasa's poems.

These facts also prove clearly the utter untenability of the stories connecting the great Kalidasa with king Bhoja of the 12th century.

While dealing with this fantastic theory I may dismiss also the other equally absurd story connecting Kalidasa with king Kumaradasa of Ceylon who reigned in the first half of the 6th century A. D. The story is that the king had a courtesan, that he propounded a riddle to her and told her that a magnificent present would be given to her if she solved it, that Kalidasa was staying in her house and solved the riddle for her, that out of cupidity she murdered him, and that eventually she confessed her crime and was punished with death. This itself is a wild story and belongs to the general stock of pungent fables in India. Further, there is no ground whatever for supposing that the Kalidasa referred to above was the same as the author of Sakuntala.

I may dismiss with a few words the theory of M. Hippolyte Fauche that the poet must have lived in the 8th century before Christ. His view is that Kalidasa must have lived during the reign of the posthumous child of king Agnivarna who is described in the last

canto of Raghuvamsa. This is a mere gratuitous assumption. If the poet lived then he would have described that king also. The fact that no later prince of the solar race is described in Raghuvamsa does not imply that there were no such later kings. On the other hand the Vishnu Purana mentions thirtyseven kings who reigned after Agnivarṇa.

I shall now proceed to discuss a few other miscellaneous suggestions before I discuss the theory which has been holding the field for some time past and which has been supported by erroneous conjectures and baseless suggestions by which the falseness of the theory has been obscured through plausible statements and ingenious though unsubstantial arguments. After such discussion is over and the debris of inaccurate theories are swept away, the way will be clear for arriving at the truth to the extent to which it is possible on the scanty materials which alone time has vouchsafed to us.

Professor Lassen thinks that Kalidasa must have flourished in the second century after Christ in the court of Samudragupta because this king is called in inscriptions as

“the friend of poets.” Most princes of those and these days are friends of poets and hence this ground is useless as a criterion for fixing dates. Professor Weber assigns to the poet the 2nd century to the 4th century A. D., which was the period of the Gupta Princes. This also is not based on any data.

Col. Wilford has built his theory about Kalidasa's belonging to the 5th century A. D., on the statement in Dhanesvara Suri's *Satrunjaya Mahatmya* that the great Vikramaditya would appear after the expiry of 466 years of the era and that 477 years after him Siladitya would reign. This theory is accepted by H. H. Wilson and James Prinsep. But Dr. Bhau Daji has shown that the era stated above was the Mahavira era and that Col. Wilford is wrong in thinking that the era was the Vikrama era. The verse about Siladitya runs thus in *Satrunjaya Mahatmya*.

सप्तसप्ततिमवदां तामिकल्प चतु शतीम् ।

विक्रमार्कच्छिन्नदित्यो भविता धर्मवृद्धिकृन् ॥

Professor Wilson wrongly thinks that the abovesaid Siladitya was the son of Vikramaditya. But Dr. Bhau Daji shows that the

Siladitya referred to in the above stanza was a king of Valabhi who is described in the poem as having expelled the Buddhists 477 years after the Vikrama era began. Thus the date assigned by Col. Wilford and Professor Wilson is palpably wrong.

The tradition which brings Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti together is a mere fiction. Bhavabhuti belonged to the last quarter of the 7th century A. D. and the first quarter of the 8th century A. D. To say on the basis of the above fiction that Kalidasa belonged to the 7th or 8th century A. D. is a palpable impropriety.

Another theory is that Kalidasa must have lived after Aryabhata (A. D. 499) as he displays a knowledge of scientific astronomy which was borrowed from the Greeks. Jacobi assigns the 4th century A. D., to Kalidasa because the word Jamitra in the first verse in canto VII of Kumarasambhava must have been borrowed from the Greek word Diametion. This is a mere guess. Very probably the word is from an old A. yan root and is a purely Sanskrit word ( जामिं दुहे रं दायत इति जामितं ). Very likely the *Jamitra sudhi* refers to *Tithi* and not to Lagna. Mallinatha however says that Jamitra is the seventh

house from the Lagna. Why should *Jamitra* have been borrowed from *Diametron*? Both, like *pitar*, *mater* etc., may have come from a more primitive root. /Even if it was borrowed why could not have come at the time of the invasion of India by Alexander or Selucus. The theory about the post-Aryabhatta date for Kalidasa is based on Raghuvamsa XIV, 40, where it is stated that the obscuration of the moon is really the shadow of the earth falling thereon. There is some doubt as to whether the verse refers to the dark spots in the lunar sphere or to an eclipse of the moon. I personally think that it refers to an eclipse. But how it follow from this that such scientific astronomical knowledge was unknown to the Hindus and was borrowed by them from the Greeks during Aryabhatta's time? The Hindus knew for a very long time about the sphericity of the earth and other astronomical facts. We can no more affirm that they got their astronomical knowledge from the Greeks than we can say from the word *Yavanika* that the Hindus owed their stage to the Greeks! Further the *Romaka Siddhanta* is older than *Aryabhatta*. Professor Mac Donnell says that it cannot be placed later than 400 A. D. In this view Professor Max

Muller's theory assigning the sixth century A. D. to Kalidasa on the assumed ground of his being subsequent to Aryabhatta is considerably weakened. Mr. Keith has, however, given new life to this theory in his recent work on *The Sanskrit Drama*. He refers to Professor Jacob's view that the equalisation of the midday with the sixth kala in the *Vikramorvasiya* shows that Kalidasa lived after the introduction from the west of the system of reckoning for ordinary purposes the day by 12 Horas, kala being evidently used as meaning Hora. But Huth interprets the passage as referring to a sixteen-fold division. Mr. Keith says that it probably refers to the figure of the lion in the zodiac. Thus the above views destroy each other. Mr. Keith says that "Kalidasa's allusion in *Raghuvamsa* and *Kumarasambhava* to the influence of the planets and his use of such technical terms as *uccha* and *jamitra* show that he must have borrowed such ideas and terms from the Greek and that a date not probably prior to A. D. 350 is indicated by such passages". This view again is based on insufficient and unproved data. As stated above there is no ground for holding that Indian astrology was a loan from Greek astrology. The term *uccha* occurs even

in the Ramayana, and the influence of the planets was as well-known to the Indians as to the Greeks and was known to the Indians much earlier than to the Greeks.

Professor Mac Donnell thinks that Kalidasa may have belonged to the court of king Chandra gupta II who was called Vikramaditya and who belonged to the beginning of the 5th century A. D. But Kalidasa does not refer to the Gupta kings at all. On the other hand he refers to Agnimitra in his *Malavikagnimitra*. I shall show the significance of this later on. The above theory of Professor Mac Donnell also is a mere guess and nothing more.

Professor Pathaka advocates the 6th century A. D. theory on the ground the 68th verse in canto IV of *Raghuvamsa* refers to the Hun kings and that it must be taken that Kalidasa was unconsciously referring to the Hun kings of his own times *who ruled in Kashmir and Punjab*, as no Huns are mentioned in the *Ramayana*. In his introduction to *Meghasandesa*, Professor Pathaka has revised his view and says that the Huns were settled on the banks of the Vankshu (Oxus) in A. D. 450, and that Kalidasa wrote his poem *Raghuvamsa* after 450 A. D. and



before their defeat in 455 A. D. by Skandagupta. He says : " In his desire to enhance the glory of his hero Kalidasa makes Raghu vanquish the Hunas of the fifth century and thus fall into as anachronism." He concludes that "Kalidasa was therefore contemporary with Skandagupta and composed most of his works in the latter half of the 5th century or before A. D. 500." Mr. Monomohan Chakravorthy fixes A. D. 490 as the date, on the theory that Hunas were in Kashmir in Kalidasa's time. The above argument proceeds as a mere gratuitous assumption. The Huna kings are referred to in the Mahabharata. The Huns established a powerful empire in and beyond Bactria from about the middle of the 3rd century B. C. to the end of 1st or 2nd century A. D. Hence even a poet of the 1st century B. C., would have known about the Hun kings. Further the identity of the *Vankshu* and the *Oxus* is itself a mere guess. The *Vankshu* seems to be the same as *Sindhu*. Moreover, Kalidasa described in the abovesaid verse an antecedent and not a contemporary event at all. Haraprasada Sastri's view that Kalidasa belonged to the court of Yasodharmadeva Dharmavardhana in the 6th century A. D., is unacceptable as Kalidasa had become a great

classic long before Bana's time which was the 6th century A. D.

Mr. Ram Kumar Chaube says that as Kalidasa uses the word "Kumara" and "Skanda" he must have belonged to the Gupta period and must have lived in the reigns of Kumara Gupta I and Skanda Gupta! This is a mere unproved guess. We may as well say that because he refers to Dilipa and Raghu he must have lived during their reigns.

Dr. Bhau Daji, Dr. Bhandarkar, Dr. Kern, and Professor Max Muller think that Kalidasa must have belonged to the sixth century A. D. I shall now proceed to show the hollowness of the facts which have been urged in support of this theory.

I. A familiar verse which occurs in *Jyotirvidabharana* says :—

धन्वन्तरिक्षपणकामरमिह-

वेतालभट्टघटर्करिकालिदामाः ।

ख्याता वराहमिहिरो नृपतेः सभायां

रत्नानि वै वररुचिर्नव विक्रमस्य ॥

The work in which this verse occurs is of doubtful authenticity and is not a reliable

guide at all. It is said that Amara Simha must have lived between the visits to India of Fahiyān in 414 A. D. and of Hiouen Thsang in 642 A. D., because in the time of Fahim's visit the Gaya temple, which an inscription says was built by Amaradeva, was not in existence while it is referred to in the account of the travels of Hiouen Thsang. Dr. Bhau Daji says that in Amaraja's commentary on Brahmagupta's *Khandana-khanda-khadya* it is stated

नवाधिकपञ्चशतसंख्याके वराहमिहिराचार्यो दिवं गतः ।

(Varahamihira went to heaven in the 509th year of the Saka era i. e., 587 A. D.). Dr. Bhau Daji hence affirms that Kalidasa also who was according to the above stanza a contemporary of Varahamihira must have belonged to the 6th century A. D. But the verse above-said appears in the *Jyotirvidabharana* and is a broken reed to lean upon. Further, it is stated that there were two, if not three, Varahamihiras. The Varahamihira who was the author of *Bṛihad-jātaka* was different from the Varahamihira who was the author of *Panchasiddhanta*. Further, we do not know at all whether the Vikrama referred to in the verse cited above was the

founder of the Saka era. The name Vikramaditya was assumed by many kings. The *Rajatarangini* refers to three Vikramadityas; and the *Kathasaritsagara* says that the Brihatkatha refers to a Vikramaditya of Ujjain and a Vikramaditya of Pataliputra. The name also assumed as a title by many kings of the Chalukya dynasty.

II. Dr. Bhau Daji approaches the question from another point of view. The *Rajatarangini* says that when Hiranya, the king of Kashmir, died issueless, Harsha-Vikramaditya of Ujjain appointed a poet named Matrigupta to rule the kingdom of Kashmir. Matrigupta ruled for four years and then became an ascetic and retired to Benares, and Hiranya's nephew Pravarasena II then assumed the throne. Harsha Vikramaditya belonged to the 6th century A. D. What follows from all this? What materials are there to connect the two names Matrigupta and Kalidasa? Kalhana, the author of *Rajatarangini*, does not at all say that Matrigupta wrote such a famous play as *Sakuntala*. Further, Kshemendra and Raghavabhatta refer to Kalidasa and Matrigupta and quote from them. It is thus clear that they

were different persons. The fact that the *Rajatarangini* states which king patronised which poet and that it is silent as to Kalidasa means nothing whatever. Nor can we use for strengthening the above theory the tradition that Vikramaditya liked Kalidasa so much as to bestow half his kingdom on him. Very likely such exaggerated descriptions were indulged in for the purpose of describing the royal favour in exaggerated terms. In the *Bhojacharita* we are told that innumerable poets were given what is familiarly known as Akshara Laksha (a lakh of gold coins for each letter). Not even Kubera's treasury can survive depletion by such an extravagance.

III. Another argument which has been advanced is that a Prakrit poem called *Sethukavya* is said to have been composed by Kalidasa at the request of king Pravarasena. Dandin, and Vidyanatha in his *Prataparudriya*, and Visvanatha in his *Sahityadarpana* refer to the poem. The *Rajatarangini* refers to Pravarasena's construction of a bridge of boats across the Vitasta river. It is this bridge which was described in *Setukavya*. But there is no reliable evidence whatever to show that it was

the immortal poet that wrote the Setukavya. Further, the evidence which I shall refer to presently conclusively demolishes the theory which allots the 6th century A. D. to Kalidasa.

IV. A side proof is sought to be imported by a reference to verse 14 in the first part of Meghasandesa. The verse says:—

स्थानादस्मात्सरसनिचुलादुत्तरतोद्भूतः खं  
 इङ्गनागानां पथि पारहरन् स्थूलहस्तावलेपान् ॥

Mallinatha records a tradition that 'Dingnaga' here refers to Kalidasa's opponent Dingnagacharya and that Nichula was a poet who was Kalidasa's friend and a defender of his fame against the attacks of hostile critics. Vallabha-deva does not refer to any such tradition at all. This view itself, even if it is correct, is a faint reference to a fugitive oral tradition. Mr. Keith points out that such a *double entendre* is not at all in Kalidasa's manner. Nothing whatever is known about Nichula. But Dingnaga is known as a famous logician. From a Tibetan life of Buddha by Ratnadharmaraja we learn that Dingnaga and Dharmakirti were the pupils of Arya Asanga in the science of logic 900 years after Buddha's death and that Asanga was the

elder brother and teacher of Vasubandhu. It is stated in Vachaspathimisra's Nyayavartika-Tatparyatika that Udyotakaracharya composed his Nyayavartika, a commentary on Pakshilasvami's Nyaya Bhashya, to disprove the sophistries of Dingnaga. This shows that Udyotakara was a contemporary or an immediate successor of Dingnaga. Subandhu mentions Udyotakara and Dharmakirti in his Vasavadatta. Subandhu is quoted in Bana's Harshacharita which was composed in the first half of the seventh century A. D. Hiouen Thsang says that Vasubandhu and his teacher Manorhita were the contemporaries of Vikramaditya of Sravashti. He says also that sixty years before his time the reigning king was Siladitya Pratapasila who succeeded Vikramaditya. Hiouen Thsang travelled in India from 629 to 645 A. D. Thus Siladitya reigned about 580 A. D. Ferishtah says that he reigned for 50 years. This would show that Vikramaditya of Sravashti died about 530 A. D. The inference which is drawn is that Vikramaditya and Kalidasa and Dingnaga must have belonged to the 6th century A. D. The various links in this chain are admirably described by Mr. G. R. Nandargikar. But the whole chain is very weak. The genuineness of the 19th verse in Megha-

sandesa is itself a matter of doubt. Further, there is nothing to show that the Dingnaga referred to in it is the Buddhist logician Dingnaga. Why should the logician be the enemy of the poet Kalidasa? It is more likely that just as Kalidasa refers to a poet named Nichula he refers to a poet Dingnaga. Further Kalidasa uses the plural "Dingnaganam". Would he use the honorific plural in regard to a disliked rival? Further, Professor Macdonnell rightly observes that "little weight can be attached to the Buddhistic tradition that Dingnaga was a pupil of Vasubandhu, for, this statement is not found till the 6th century". He says also with great force: "The assertion that Vasubandhu belongs to the 6th century is opposed to Chinese evidence which indicates that the works of Vasubandhu were translated in A. D. 404. Thus every link in the chain of this argument is weak. Mr. Keith also says well about the Dingnaga theory. "The difficulties of this argument are insurmountable".

V. Thus all the above arguments are weak and useless. A startling theory was however propounded by Fergusson who while not disputing the contemporaneousness of Vikrama-



ditya and Kalidasa, stated that that king really belonged to the 6th century A. D., that the king was Vikrama Harsha of Ujjain who fought the great battle of Karur and defeated the Mlechhas in 544 A. D. and that the people threw back the date by 600 years and made the era begin in 56 B. C., so as to invest the event with the halo of antiquity! But this theory about the antedating of the era is a pure surmise. How would such antedating increase the glory of the victory? Further, Dr. Fleet shows that the Vikrama era was in use for more than a century prior to 549 A. D. Further, Vatsabhatti's Mandasor inscriptions which were discovered by Dr. Fleet and which have been elaborately discussed by Mr. Nandargikar have exploded Mr. Fergusson's ingenious theory. One of them bears as its date the 494th year of the Vikrama era. It shows that the Vikrama era was in use for more than a century prior to 544 A. D., under the name of the Malava era. The Mandasor inscriptions prove that the verses appearing in them belonged to 472 A. D.; and they contain verses which bear a considerable resemblance to Kalidasa's verses in Ritusamhara and Meghasandesa, and which show that Kalidasa's works must have been very familiar

by that time. Further, there were no Sakas to be driven out from Western India in the sixth century A. D., as the Gupta kings had driven them out a century before then.

The well-known scholar Mr. A. B. Keith says in his *Classical Sanskrit Literature*: "It cannot be seriously doubted that he was later than Asvaghosa and the Dramatist, Bhasa certainly, whose plays we owe to the energy of T. Ganapathi Sastrin; everything points to his flourishing in the time of Gupta glory; the allusion to the horse sacrifice in the *Malavikagnimitra* is almost inevitably to be explained as a reminiscence of the performance of that rite by Samudragupta, renewing the glories of the ancient regime. The Vikramaditya, therefore, with whom Kalidasa is associated in tradition, seems most naturally to be taken as Chandragupta II, whose reign may be placed between A. D. 380 and 413". But with all deference to his scholarship it seems to me that the facts stated by him are not fully correct and further do not warrant his conclusion. I shall show later that the assumed priority of Asvaghosha does not seem to be correct. Mr. A. B. Keith says that Bhasa cannot be placed before 300

A. D. This again is an unproved date. Further, there is acute controversy as to whether the so-called plays of Bhasa are his plays at all or are Kerala adaptations of his plays or are the plays of some Kerala author. There is no justification for the view that the horse-sacrifice stated in the *Malavikagnimitra* is Samudragupta's horse-sacrifice. The play expressly refers to Agnimitra's father Pushpamitra's horse-sacrifice and there is no propriety in the view that what is stated is really a reference to something else.

Equally weak is his view that Kalidasa's *Prakrit* supports his date. He says in his work on the *Sanskrit Drama*: "Similar evidence can be derived from Kalidasa's *Prakrit*, which is plainly more advanced than that of Bhasa, while his *Maharashtri* can be placed with reasonable assurance after that of the earlier *Maharashtri* which may have flourished in the third and fourth century A. D." This is a pure and unproved guess. Thus Mr. Keith's view that Kalidasa must have "flourished under Chandragupta II of Ujjain who ruled upto about A. D. 413 with the style of Vikramaditya which is perhaps alluded to in the name *Vikra-*

*morvasi*", and that the "Kumarasambhava's title may well hint a compliment on the birth of young Kumaragupta, his son and successor" is not acceptable. He says: "Moreover, the poems of Kalidasa are essentially those of the Gupta period, when the Brahmanical and Indian tendencies of the dynasty were in full strength and the menace of foreign attack for the time evanescent". This again is an unproved assumption. Kalidasa certainly belonged to a period of resurgent Hindu culture but I shall show that the period was long anterior to the Gupta period. In his recent valuable work on Classical Literature Mr. Keith however affirms his previous view and says "Kalidasa then lived before A. D. 472 and probably at a considerable distance so that to place him about A. D. 400 seems completely justified".

I have thus far discussed the innumerable theories which have been propounded about the date of Kalidasa and shown the futility and untenability of them all. It seems to me that the universal and well-attested traditions that he was attached to the court of Vikramaditya at Ujjain and that Vikramaditya's Saka era began with 56 B. C., to commemorate his

great victory should be given the credence which they deserve. It is no doubt true that various kings of later eras assumed the title of Vikramaditya. It has been said well: "In the grand panorama of ancient history we come across the flitting shapes of several Vikramadityas in southern, western and northern India, from the first century before Christ to the seventh after." But it does not follow therefrom that the tradition connecting the poet with Vikramaditya of the first century B. C. is weakened thereby. A Nasik inscription of the first century after Christ refers to a king described as *Sakari*. There are no grounds to reject the traditions about the Saka era inaugurated by Vikramaditya in the first century B. C. and about Kalidasa having belonged to his court. It seems to me that Kalidasa intended to pay his patron a delicate compliment by calling his play by the name Vikramorvasiya. He says in Act I of the play that humility is the glory of valour.

अनुमेवः खलु विक्रमालङ्कारः ।

We may remember in this connection the delicate compliment paid by Shakespeare to

Queen Elizabeth in the famous lines in the *Midsummer Nights Dream* :

“ But the imperial votaress passed on  
In maiden meditation fancy free ”.

Mr. A. W. Ryder says, “No doubt Kalidasa intended to pay a tribute to his patron, the son of valour, in the very title of his play, *Urvashi won by valour*”. I shall now give the many converging lines of testimony which justify the view that Kalidasa belonged to the first century B. C. I may mention in this connection that this date is assigned to him by Sir William Jones and Mr. S. P. Pandit. Dr. Peterson says: “Kalidasa stands near the beginning of the Christian era, if indeed he does not overtop it”.

Mr. K. B. Pathak says in his introduction to Meghasandesa that the name of Vikramaditya was not connected at first with the Vikrama era, that the era was known as the Malava era, and that it must have become connected with the name of Vikrama because “of some confused reminiscence of the crushing defeat inflicted by Skandagupta, who had the title of Vikramaditya, upon the Hunas who

were settled in the Oxus valley by the middle of the fifth century after Christ, and who were at once a menace to the Sussanian and Roman empires". Every step in this reasoning is unsupported by any acceptable reason. The fact that the era was known some centuries as the Malava era will not show that it was not originally known as the Vikrama era. There is no justification for saying that the victory of Skandagupta was somehow transferred to Vikramaditya and that somehow Vikrama was mixed up with the Malava era. Mr. A. B. Keith says in his work on *The Sanskrit Drama*; "There is not the slightest reason to accept so early a date (56 B. C.) for Kalidasa, and it has now no serious supporter outside India". But I shall proceed to show that that is the only correct date. Vikramaditya was not an imaginary king. Colonel Todd has in his Rajasthan collected the geneology of the kings who ruled over Delhi from Yudhishtira to Vikramaditya. The later kings who assumed the name Vikramaditya did so because of the unparalleled greatness of the first king who assumed that name and to whose court Kalidasa belonged and whom Kalidasa has alluded to and praised

in a subtle and delicate way in his immortal poems and plays.

I have referred above to the indirect references in Kalidasa's works to king Vikramaditya. Another vague reference also has been emphasised by Babu Dhanapati Banerji with some plausibility. In Raghuvamsa, (VI, 32nd) there is a delicate and veiled praise of the king of Avanti.

अग्रन्तिनाथोऽयमुदप्रवाहु-

विशालवक्षास्तनुवृत्तमध्यः ।

आरोप्य चक्रभ्रममुष्णतेजा-

स्त्वष्ट्रेव यत्नोलिखितो विभाति ॥

The reference in the first half of the stanza appears to be to valour (*Vikrama*), and the reference in the word Ushnatejah in the second half is to the sun (*aditya*). In the next verse the poet says that Princess Indumati did not feel love for him; just as Kumuda flowers do not feel the attraction of the sun (कुमुद्वती भानुमतीव भावं). Here also the reference by the word Bhanu may be to Vikramaditya. But these are too faint and doubtful indications to be used as reliable proofs. But Mr. Banerji points out that tradition says that Bhanumati was the name of



the queen of the first Vikramaditya, the founder of the Malava Era and the king of Avanti. Further, in the description of Raghu's Digvijaya (universal conquest) the kingdom of Avanti is omitted altogether. Mr. Banerji rightly points out: "This therefore points to the conclusion that Kalidasa flourished under Vikramaditya, the king of Ujjain, not long after 2nd century B. C."

Babu Dhanapati Banerji points out further that Gunadhya belonged to the court of king Salivahana and flourished in the first century A. D. Gunadhya's Brihatkatha has not been found out. We have two epitomes of it in Sanskrit viz., Brihatkatha Manjari and Kathasaritsagara. In the Meghasandesa (1, 31) Kalidasa refers to the traditions about Udayana. If Gunadhya's work had been in existence before his time, such a reference to traditions is most unlikely. Further Salivahana made a collection of gathas in Prakrit. One of these poems compares Vikramaditya to the foot of a damsel. Another praises Salivahana in comparison with Vikramaditya. There are other gathas containing clear references to Meghasandesa and Sakuntala. It is thus clear that Kalidasa

must have lived long before the time of king Salivahana.

A very important fact is that in the play of *Malavikagnimitra* Kalidasa refers to *Pushpamitra Agnimitra* and *Vasumitra*. *Agnimitra* and *Vasumitra* are referred to in *Bhagavata XII*, verses 16 and 17. The General *Pushpamitra* killed king *Brihadratha*, who was the last king of the *Maurya* dynasty, and usurped the throne of *Magadha* and founded the *Sunga* dynasty. He belonged to about 150 B. C. *Patanjali*, the famous author of the *Maha Bhashya*, refers to him and his *Asvamedha* sacrifice. *Patanjali's* date is fixed as about 150 B. C. The 1st and 2nd stanzas in Act. V of *Malavikagnimitra* refer to a military campaign by *Agnimitra* which was contemporaneous with the events described in the play. The second half of the last stanza in *Malavikagnimitra* uses the words.

“संवत्स्यते न खलु गोप्सुरि नाम्निमित्रे”

These words show that the poet and the king were contemporaries. In the stanza the first half is the reply of the King to the Queen and the second half alone is the *Bharatavakyam*. If the second half also was the king's reply to

the Queen, it would show the king to have been a man of vanity and self-praise, and Kalidasa would never have described his hero in such a light. In Katayavema's commentary on the play, the second half of the stanza alone is described as the Bharatavakya. Kalidasa evidently described by the Bharatavakya his view about the blessings of the reign of Agnimitra. The second half of the stanza says that as Agnimitra is reigning, the troubles of life will not molest the people and the joys of life will come to them. Katayavema who has written a commentary on the play says that the reference is to a king reigning at the time of the play.

( अग्निमित्रस्य कथनं तत्कालराजोपलक्षणमिति मन्तव्यं )

Further, though the rule inculcated in works on poetics was that a drama should describe former kings, ( नाटकं ख्यातवृत्तं स्यात् पञ्चसन्धिसमन्वितं ), Kalidasa made a departure and wrote a play on a reigning king and justified his departure by the verse

“ पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वं  
न चापि काव्यं नवमित्यवद्यम् ”

which occurs in the prologue to *Malavikagnimitra*. The poet departed from the ordinary rule in not invoking prosperity and blessings to the people or referring to kings generally but boldly referred to a specific contemporary king in the present tense and said that during his reign all blessings must perforce come to the people. Such a reference to a reigning contemporary king (Chandragupta) is found in the *Bharatavakya* in the famous play *Mudrarakshasa* by Visakhadatta. Mr. A. W. Ryder points out: "The hero King Agnimitra is an historical character of the second century before Christ and Kalidasa's play gives us some information about him that history can seriously consider. The play presents Agnimitra's father, the founder of the Sunga dynasty, as still living."

Another point to be noted in regard to the *Malavikagnimitra* is that in Act V verse 2, there is a veiled yet palpable reference to the contemporaneity of the King Agnimitra and the poet. The verse says:—

विरचितपदं वीरप्रीत्या सुरोपमसूरिभिः चरितं

(O God-like King! Your history written by the poets from love of heroism). The verse

probably refers to the poet's own exaltation of the glory of the great and heroic sovereign. Mr. Ryder has missed the real significance of the reference in the play to the king as a contemporary sovereign and says : " Yet in Kalidasa's day, the glories of the Sunga dynasty were long departed, nor can we see why the poet should have chosen his hero and his era as he did".

Another important fact is that in Malavikāgnimitra the character Parivrajika has been introduced and King Agnimitra has been described as showing the greatest respect to her. Though Buddhism had begun to wane in the 1st century B. C., yet its ideals were not treated as dead or worthless. If Kalidasa lived in later eras he would not have introduced a woman ascetic at all, because in those periods the life of the ascetic and the robe of the ascetic were forbidden to women. When the Parivrajika describes to the king how she came to own the robe of an ascetic and become an ascetic the king replies :

“युक्तः सज्जनस्यैव पन्थाः”

(What you did is the proper act of a good

person). Mr. S. P. Pandit says : "The probability, therefore, is that the play was written not at a time when Buddhism was despised and had already been driven out of India but when it was still regarded with favour, and was looked up to with reverence". I have also referred above to the Kumbhodara and Nandini episode in Raghuvamsa as showing the influence of the Buddhist doctrine of compassion to all beings. But at the same time we must not forget that though there was a survival of some Buddhist ideals, Hinduism with its emphasis on Veda and Yajna and Iswara and grace had triumphantly reasserted itself and overthrown Buddhism and finds one of its most perfect expressions in Kalidasa, though not as clearly as in Sri Sankaracharya.

That Kalidasa belongs to the period when Hinduism was victorious over Buddhism is clear also from the first stanza in the Sakuntalam. Buddhism did not believe in God as it did not believe in scripture and as God is not an object of direct sense perception. The poet affirms the Hindu doctrine of the importance of *Sabda* (scripture) as a source of proof (vide यामाहुः सर्वबीजप्रकृतिरिति). He says further that God is

an object of perception by the purified mind in *yoga* and by *bhakti*.

(प्रत्यक्षाभिस्तनुभिः)

He affirms this also in the opening benedictory stanza in the *Vikramorvasya*.

स स्थाणु स्थिरभक्तियोगसुलभः

In the last verse in the *Sakuntala* he points that the cessation of rebirth is not something that comes of itself but is the result of the grace of God.

ममापि च क्षय्यतु नीललोहितः

पुनर्भवं परिगतशक्तिरात्मभूः ॥

Further, he affirms, as against the Buddhist doctrine about the imperativeness of monasticism, the Hindu view that the Karma-yoga of the house-holder is itself a form of *tapas*. In *Sakuntala*, II, 14, he says that the king is acquiring *tapas* by his performing daily the great work of the protection of his subjects.

रक्षायोगादयमपि तपः प्रत्यहं संचिनोति ।

and that the king is a sage on the throne

पुण्यः शब्दो मुनिरिति मुहुः केवलं राजपूर्वः ।

Indeed Kanva says in *Sakuntala*, IV, 19, that *Sakuntala* should along with her lord bear the burden of sovereignty and achieve the good of the world in their son's hands after training him to the great work, and then seek the repose of meditation in the hermitage. In all his poems and plays the poet praises the sacrificial spirit and act, though the Buddhists had condemned all the sacrifices (e. g. *Raghuvamsa*, I, 26, *Sakuntala* VII, 34 etc.). He treats the great sages with perfect reverence and says that their learning and austerities are the means of order and progress in the world (see *Sakuntala*, II, 13).

I would however utter one word of caution in reference to the argument based on the character of *Parivrajika* in *Malavikagnimitra*. Though according to Hindu scriptures a woman could not enter into the fourth order and become a *Sanyasini*, we must remember that Buddhism, defeated though it was by resurgent Hinduism, left some legacies of custom and doctrine leaving Hinduism though in a subtle and acknowledged manner. In the time of Kalidasa Hinduism had definitely reasserted itself. But women mendicants were not un-



known. In Kautilya's Arthasastra a Parivrajika's spy is thus described:

परिव्राजिका वृत्तिकामा दग्ध्वा विधवा प्रगल्भा ब्राह्मणी  
अन्तःपुरे कुतस्तकारा महामात्रकुलान्यभिगच्छेत् ।

(Adhikarana I Adhyaya 12). Thus she should be a poor and erudite Brahmin widow seeking service in a royal harem. This description fits well the character of Parivrajika-Kausiki in the play. She says:—

पुनर्नवीभूतवैधव्यदुःखया मया त्वदसिदेशं अवतीर्य काषाये  
गृहीते ।

(With renewed widowed grief I entered your domain and accepted the orange robe). The poet describes her by means of the simile of Adhyatma Vidya i. e., the science of the soul which is the technical name for Vedanta (Act I verse 14). The king bows to her and calls her Bhagavati and Pandita Kausiki. Thus Kausiki is a learned Brahmin widow ascetic and not a Buddhist mendicant. Bhavabhuti has introduced a similar character in his *Malati Madhava*. It seems to me therefore that though Kalidasa belongs to the post-Buddhistic period, he belongs to the time when Buddhism had not

altogether vanished from the land and when Hinduism was triumphant but with Buddhistic legacies yet fresh in her hands. His verse सरस्वतीभूतिमहतां महीयतां in the last stanza Sakuntala shows that he belongs to a time when the Veda was triumphant in the land of its birth. His first verse in Vikramorvasiya refers to the reaffirmed and reestablished doctrines of yoga and bhakti. Very likely he refers to the conquest of Buddhism in the last line in the first verse of Malavikagnimitra :

सन्मार्गलोकनाय व्यपनयतु स न स्तामसीं वृत्तिभीशः ॥

Equally important is the fact that Kumarila Bhatta has expressly referred to the well-known verse in Sakuntala :

सतां हि सन्देहपदेषु वस्तुषु

प्रमाणमन्तःकरणप्रवृत्तयः ॥

In Kumarila's Tantravartika the reference to this verse appears as follows: (Someswara says in his Nyaya Sudha that the word kavi in the verse refers to Kalidasa ).

एवं च विद्वच्चनाद्विनिर्गतं

प्रसिद्धरूपं कविभिर्निरूपितम् ।

सतां हि सन्देहपदेषु वस्तुषु

प्रमाणमन्तःकरणप्रवृत्तयः ॥

The use of the word *Kavibhir* in the above verse in the plural without mentioning the poet's name shows in what respect he was held by Kumarila Bhatta. In my monograph on Sri Sankaracharya I have given at great length my reasons for holding that the date ( 788 A. D. to 820 A. D. ) assigned to him is wrong and that he lived in the first century B. C. Kumarila was a contemporary of Sri Sankara. Hence also it is clear that Kalidasa must have flourished in the 1st century B. C., or before then.

Further, I shall show in my second Volume on Kalidasa, it is clear that he belonged to a time when Hinduism was unified and triumphant. The sects and schisms of a later time were unknown then. He sings with equal love and reverence about Brahma and Vishnu and Siva. He harmonises activism and renunciation and shows the interdependence and congruity of Karma and Yoga and Bhakti and Jnana. His period must have coincided with—or rather slightly preceded—the great renaissance of a unified and triumphant Hinduism in South

India in the person of the world-renowned Sri Sankaracharya.

The internal evidence afforded by the *Sakuntala* is very valuable. In regard to the law of inheritance, it refers to a period when the widow's right of inheritance was as yet unsettled. In the sixth Act the Prime Minister reports that a merchant named Dhanamitra had died without sons and that hence under the law his estate escheated to the state. The king orders that as the merchant's wife was pregnant the estate should be handed over to the child *in utero matris*. Manu, Apastamba and Bodhayana and Vasishtha do not recognise a widow as an heir but allow the rights of a child in the womb. Gautama and Brihaspati recognise her right to share along with the sagotra Sapindas. Later smriti-writers like Yajnavalkya, Brihaspati, Vyasa, Narada, Sankha and Likhita recognise her heirship. Hence the composition of the drama may have been after Manu, Apastamba, Bodhayana and Vasishtha and prior to Narada, Gautama, Katyayana, Brihaspati and Yajnavalkya. Brihaspati's date is said to be 1st century A. D. and Kalidasa must hence have flourished before his time.

In the same play we learn that the fisherman who was charged with the theft of the royal ring was liable to the sentence of death. In Vikramorvasiya V, 1, it is said that the thief of the gem had secured not the gem but only his own death. In the times of Manu, Apasthamba, Bodhayana, Vasishtha, Gautama, and Narada, the rule of law was that a thief who stole precious stones was liable to a sentence of death. In the time of Brihaspati, Yajnavalkya and Vyasa the punishment was fine or death. Hence also if Brihaspati belonged to the first century A. D. Kalidasa must have lived before his time.

I must however say about the above-said two inferences that they are not of much probative value. The dates of the Smriti-writers are themselves subjects of considerable dispute and it is hardly proper to try to solve one unknown by other unknowns.

It has been further pointed out that Kalidasa does not in his works refer to himself or his patron in terms of laudation. Later writers set that literary fashion. Even Gunadhya who is said to have flourished in the first century A. D., described himself and his royal patron.

The literary fashion became very pronounced in the time of later writers like Bhavabhuti. The fact that Kalidasa has not indulged in such praise of himself or his patron is another feature showing that he flourished in an early period.

I may refer to a few other miscellaneous facts. A Patavali composed by Merutanga-charya, a Jaina Pandit, says: "After Nabho-vahana Garddabhitta ruled at Ujjain for 13 years, when Sri Kalikacharya, on account of violence offered to his sister Sarasvati, uprooted Garddabhitta, and established Saka Kings in Ujjain. They ruled there for 4 years. Garddabhitta's son Vikramaditya regained the kingdom of Ujjain and having relieved the debt of the world by means of gold, commenced the Vikrama samvat era. This took place 470 years after Vira's era. Vikrama's reign extended over 60 years. His son Vikramacharitra alias Dharmaditya ruled for 40 years. The next kings Bhaila, Nailla, and Nahada ruled for 11, 14, and 10 years respectively. The Saka era now commenced 605 years after Vira Nirvana." This shows that a Vikramaditya reigned 135 years before the commencement of Saka era.

It is further pointed out that the Bhitia terracotta Medallion refers to the deer scene in Sakuntala and to the scene in the play where Sakuntala waters the trees. The Medallion belonged to the Sunga period. The Sunga Kings ruled at Pataliputra from 184 B. C. to 72 B. C.

It is also known that Raghuvamsa in Pali was taken to Java by Hindus who emigrated there about the 1st century B. C. This fact also throws light on the antiquity of the great poet and his works.

Further, Mallinatha quotes from Vardhamana's Gunaratnamahodadhi. Mallinatha flourished about 1350 A. D. Vardhamana may have lived a century before him. He says that his work was composed 1197 years after Vikrama.

सप्तनवत्यधिकेऽष्टकादशसु शतेष्वतीतेषु ।

वर्षाणां विक्रमते गुणरत्नमहोदधिर्विहितः ॥

From this we can infer that Vikrama lived before 53 A. D.

Further, it has been pointed out that the word Parameshthi is used by Kalidasa as a name of Brahma and Vishnu and also of stoma. But Amara Simha confines it to Brahma alone.

Thus Kalidasa must have lived prior to Amarasimha's time when the significance was not loose as in Kalidasa's time but had become fixed and confined. It has been pointed out also that Kalidasa often uses the word पेलव (Pelava). Later writers such as Vamana (8th century A. D.) say that the word is obscene and should not be used. This also shows that Kalidasa lived long before the degradation of that word. Further, though Kalidasa was a profound grammarian there are lapses from Panini's rules in his works. He uses the word त्रियंबक instead of त्र्यंबक. In Vikramorvasiya Act I he says गच्छतीव प्रसादं while the right form is गच्छन्ती. The latter form is used in Meghasandesa I verse 41. He used मन्दं मन्दं as well as मन्दमन्दं. All this shows that Kalidasa lived at a time when Panini's domination over Grammar had not become rigorous and universal. It is said that Panini belonged to the 3rd century B. C. This also shows that it is likely that Kalidasa belonged to the 2nd century or the 1st century B. C. Further, Kalidasa's style is free from long compounds and from even the slightest trace of artificiality. He must hence have been long anterior to Dandin. Bana and Bhavabhuti in



whom long compounds and a laboured and artificial style are frequent features.

Another important fact is that Asvaghosa's *Buddhacharita* has many passages and ideas parallel to those in *Raghuvamsa*. I am of opinion that there is no foundation for the view that Kalidasa was indebted to Asvaghosa and that it was rather *vice versa*. Professor S. Roy has shown this clearly, and Mr. Joglekar also is of the same opinion in his introduction to *Buddhacharita*. Asvaghosha was more of a philosopher than a poet and it is more likely that he borrowed from the great poet Kalidasa than that Kalidasa borrowed from him. The Chinese catalogues refer to Asvaghosha as the religious preceptor of Kanishka who lived at the beginning of the Saka period i. e., A. D. 78. It is therefore clear that Kalidasa must have lived before the time of Asvaghosa who belonged to the 1st century A. D. and that Kalidasa probably belonged at the latest to the 1st century B. C.

Thus it seems to me that Kalidasa belonged to the great period of national greatness and prosperity and magnificence when Vikramaditya reestablished Hindu religion and Hindu sove-

reignity in the first century B. C. I cannot do better here than quote the words of Mr. Ryder who emphasises this fact in explicit and convincing terms : " The central fact is not doubtful that there was at this time and place a great quickening of the human mind, an artistic impulse creating works that cannot perish. Ujjain in the days of Vikramaditya stands worthily beside Athens, Rome, Florence, and London in their great centuries. Here is the substantial fact behind Max Muller's often ridiculed theory of the renaissance of Sanskrit literature. It is quite false to suppose, as some appear to do, that this theory has been invalidated by the discovery of certain literary products which antedate Kalidasa. It might even be said that those rare and happy centuries that see a man as great as Homer or Virgil or Kalidasa or Shakespeare partake in that one man of a renaissance " .



## CHAPTER VI.

### The Life of Kalidasa.

**V**ERY little that is authentic is known about the life of Kalidasa. The habit of keeping a correct record of the lives of great men is a new acquisition of humanity. The biographies and autobiographies of the former centuries are very few indeed. In the west the fine arts of biography and autobiography came into vogue in the last three or four centuries and especially and on a large scale in the last century. Even the art of history, upon which the west prides itself, and prides itself fitly and legitimately, became highly cultivated and elaborated only during the last few centuries. It must no doubt be conceded that the European races have always had better historical instincts and habits and tastes than the Asiatic races including the people of India. It is, hence, not a matter for surprise at all that we have few or no biographical details in regard to Kalidasa. The world would have been richer in many ways if some antique Boswell had stuck to him and turned him inside out for us so that we may know the workings of that marvellous mind and the good

and ill fortune which attended his life and the manner in which he met success or failure. But lived so long ago and has become a mere name—though a revered and honoured name—and we have no materials for reconstructing an authentic life at all.

The current tradition about his life is as follows. The poet was a Brahmin's child. He was left as an orphan when he was a child six months old and was brought up by a shepherd. He was a handsome child full of sprightliness and charm. The daughter of the king of Benaras was one of the most learned persons of her day and was proud of her learning. The king resolved to marry her only to a man of equal culture and vowed that her hand could be won only by one who could defeat her in a learned disputation. Scholar after scholar, poet after poet, assayed the task but failed ignominiously. Afterwards the rejected suitors resolved to have revenge and resorted to a mean and cruel trick. They picked upon the above-said boy now grown into a handsome man and gave out that he was their *Guru* and took him to the Princess, after warning him to pretend wisdom and observe silence. They told her that he was a

man of peerless learning and wisdom but had taken a vow of absolute silence. Then she began a disputation with him by means of signs. She showed one finger and said that the cause of the universe was one. Kalidasa showed two fingers. His so-called disciples then quoted innumerable authorities and gave out many arguments to prove that two principles in operation gave rise to the world. In that day's disputation they won and the credit went to Kalidasa. The Princess was attracted by the young man's beauty and personality and seemingly profound wisdom. The king celebrated her marriage with the youth. During the bridal night, the young bridegroom, exhausted with the fatigue of the day's unusual happenings amidst unfamiliar surroundings, fell into a deep sleep before the Princess came to share his bed. She sang sweet songs but the obtuse soul of the man hardly felt the charm of the melody. He was in a state of half sleep and began to dream and called out in dream to his cattle. The princess woke him up and sternly demanded that he should reveal truth and threatened him with dire penalties. The timorous man who had been abandoned without assistance

or advice by his evil-hearted employers blurted out and confessed the truth. The Princess was ashamed and grieved but there was no help. She advised him to go to the temple of Goddess Kali and pray for divine grace. He did so. In the temple he attained divine grace and became full of wisdom and poetic power. When he returned his face beamed with the new glory lighted in his soul by the grace of the Goddess. He was thenceforward known as Kalidasa. The Princess saw from his face that he had attained divine blessings and asked him अस्ति कश्चिद्वगर्थः (*Asti kaschidvagarthah* i. e. Has there been any attainment of power of speech and thought?). It is said that thereupon he broke forth into sweet and sublime poetry. He began his *Kumara Sambhava* with the word *Asti*, his *Megha Sandesa* with the word *Kaschit*, and his *Raghuvamsa* with the word *Vagarthah*. He prostrated before her as his mother i. e., the mother of the higher self born in him as the result of her suggestion and command. He then lived as the court poet in the court of King Vikramaditya and achieved immortal fame by his works.

This is the tradition most universally current about Kalidasa. The stories — piquant

and attractive as they are—about his connection with king Bhoja are of no value. I have described them in detail in my Tamil work called *Bhoja Charitram*. King Bhoja belonged to very recent times and lived and reigned at Dhara in Malwa in the eleventh century A. D. The Kalidasa attached to his court was not the Kalidasa of immortal fame but Parimala Kalidasa who composed *Nava Sahasanka Charitam* and *Vijiasri* describing the greatness of the king. It is in regard to this recent poet that the story is said that he was attached to a courtesan and met his death at her hands when her cupidity extinguished her affection. It is not unlikely that even this story is a fiction and a fraud. We know that the false and impudent story about the demon Maniman was born as Sri Sankaracharya has been invented and has been even palmed off as a puranic story. Bigotry and jealousy and a love of the romantic and the marvellous have been all over the world causes of lies masquerading as facts. The stories connecting Kalidasa with Dandin and with Bhavabhuti and the stories connecting him with King Kumaradasa of Ceylon (A.D. 515) and stating that he was killed by a courtesan in Ceylon and that the king burnt himself on

Kalidasa's funeral pyre are equally apocryphal and worthless.

I have dealt elsewhere in this work with the date and the birthplace of Kalidasa and the learning and the noble qualities of the poet. We can in a large measure reconstruct Kalidasa the man from Kalidasa's works. Such a work is more interesting and more likely to yield valuable results than the collection and recording of the innumerable unverified and unverifiable and irreconcilable and mutually conflicting incidents in his life as handed down by traditions of different degrees of untruth. It almost looks as if—to adopt an idea beautifully described in his poem *Kumarasambhava*—Time not only destroyed the life but the life-record as well of this Lord of Hearts (*Manmatha*) and made him *Ananga* (bodiless) and *Kathavasesha* (reduced to a mere name). The life of Kalidasa cannot be brought by human love or labour into the world of facts and has become a wanderer in Legend-Land.

The works of Kalidasa about which there is and there could be no dispute are *Ritusamhara*, *Kumarasambhava*, *Meghasandesa*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Malavikagnimitra*, *Vikramorvasiya*, and *Sakun-*



tala. The other works attributed to him are Syamala Dandaka, Sringara Tilaka, Sringara Rasashtaka, Pushpabana vilasa, Srutabodha, Gangashtaka, Nalodaya, Rakshasakavya, the Prakrit poem Setubandhakavya, Kalistotra, Jyotirvidabharana. Most of these are evidently spurious and do not possess his characteristic excellences of thought and style. There are no grounds whatever for attributing the astronomical treatise Jyotirvidabharana to him; the attribution of Nalodaya to him is equally wrong. In fact some of the manuscripts of the poem describes it as the work of Ravideva who was a son of Narayana. Out of the other poems it is not likely that Setubandha kavya or Kalistotra is from his pen. About the other poems it is difficult to hazard an opinion. They are of unequal poetic merit but contain some verses and phrases and ideas and sentiments worthy of the immortal poet.

An attempt has been often made to fix the sequence of the composition of the seven beautiful poems which are undeniably the work of Kalidasa. This task is pure guess-work and is one that is best left undone. All that we can say with any degree of certainty is that it is

likely out of the three dramas *Malavikagnimitra* was written first. I do not agree with the theory that *Vikramorvasiya* was written after *Sakuntala* and shows the waning and decline of Kalidasa's powers. I am discussing Mr. Ryder's view on this matter later on. I am of opinion that it is likely that all the plays were written after some of the poems were written. They show a maturity of style and of judgment and a knowledge of the world which are generally attained only in adult life by even the children of the Muses. I would put *Ritusamhara* and *Kumarasambhava* first in order of time, then *Malavikagnimitra*, then *Vikramorvasiya*, and finally *Meghasandesa*, *Raghuvamsa* and *Sakuntala*. I shall show below that we cannot accept the view that *Raghuvamsa* was composed before *Kumarasambhava*. But whatever be the sequence of his works there is no doubt about the crescent harmony of his great works, which like the seven basic notes of Music comprise the entire realm of melodious sweetnees of thought and style.





## CHAPTER VII.

### Kalidasa The Man.

**T**He works of Kalidasa give us some clue about the man though they throw no light on his life. Though the modern resources of autobiography and biography were unknown in those ancient days, yet we have enough indications in his great writings to reveal the man. His was a noble and pure and pious and balanced nature, revering nature and reverencing the noble qualities of the refined human spirit and adoring God, equally at home in village and in city and in the sublime solitudes of forest and mountains, eager for the pure enjoyment of a synthesised life, dowered with perfect serenity and composure of spirit, fired to the depths of his being with the Ideals of *Satya* and *Santi* and *bhakti* and *ahimsa*—in short, one of the most perfect incarnations of the Hindu racial genius.

It is apparent from his writings that Kalidasa was a great traveller and that he knew the scenery as well as men and manners and customs all over India. He knew South India as well as North India, though of course he knew more minutely North India which was his birth place. Cantos 4 and 13 of Raghuvamśa describe South India. The fourth canto of Raghuvamśa and the first part of Meghasandesa are full of places of interest in North India. Meghasandesa refers also to Ramagiri in the Central Provinces. Kumarasambhava is full of the beauty and the sublimity of the Himalayas and of the Ganges. He describes the saffron flower that grows in Kashmir. I shall show in my second volume how accurate and lively are his descriptions of nature and how he knew well Indian manners and habits and customs. He had a special love for hermitages in beautiful forests. He makes Dushyanta say in Sakuntala :

पुण्याश्रमदर्शनेन तत्रदात्मानं पुनीमहे ।

(Let us purify ourselves by seeing the holy hermitage). Raghuvamśa opens with the peaceful beauty of a hermitage and Sakuntala opens in the heaven of one hermitage and closes in

the heaven of another hermitage, while Kumara-sambhava describes the holiest hermitages of all,—the places of the penance of Siva and of Parvati.

Kalidasa had an equal appreciation of the graces and refinements and sanctities of human life. Mr. Ryder has said well: “One feels certain that he was physically handsome and the handsome Hindu is a wonderfully fine type of manhood. One knows that he possessed a fascination for women, as they in turn fascinated him. One knows that children loved him. One becomes convinced that he never suffered any morbid, soul-shaking experience such as besetting religious doubt brings with it, or the pangs of despised love; that on the contrary he moved among men and women with a serene and God-like tread, neither self-indulgent nor ascetic, with mind and senses ever alert to every form of beauty. We know that his poetry was popular while he lived, and we cannot doubt that his personality was equally attractive, though it is probable that (no contemporary knew the full measure of his greatness.) For his nature was one of singular balance, equally at home in a splendid court and on a lonely moun-

tain, with men of high and low degree. Such men are never fully appreciated during life. "They continue to grow after they are dead".

These are true and weighty and well-considered and valuable words. There is a traditionally current story about the poet which shows the truth of these remarks. One day a poor and ignorant man sought his aid. He sent him to the king for help and told him to tell the king त्रिषीडापरिहारोऽस्तु (May you be free from the three worries!). But the foolish man went to the king and said त्रिषीडास्तु (May you have the three worries;). At once Kalidasa got up and told the king that the man blessed him and that his idea was as stated in the following verse.

आसने विप्रषीडाऽस्तु त्रिषीडा च भोजने ।

शयने दारषीडाऽस्तु त्रिषीडाऽस्तु दिने दिने ॥

(May you, when you are sitting on your throne, have the trouble of getting up to receive honoured visitors. May you, when you are dining, be troubled by your children trying to climb up your knee. May you, when you are in bed, be disturbed in your sleep by the embraces of your queen. May you have these

worries day after day!). It is said that the king applauded the sentiment and handsomely rewarded the poor man.

It is not possible to deal here *in extenso* with Kalidasa's description of virtues and graces of life. Such lines as the following show how he knew that it is the life of altruism and purity and dharma, the life that refrains from adharma and vice, the life that reveres those worthy of reverence, the life that is full of compassion and composure, which will be a blessing to all here and a source of blessing in heaven.

ज्ञाने मौनं क्षमा शक्तौ त्यागे श्लाकाविपर्ययः ।

गुणा गुणानुबन्धित्वात्तस्य सप्रसवा इव ॥

(Raghuvamsa I. 22)

प्रतिवध्नाति हि श्रेयः पूज्यपूजाव्यतिक्रमः ।

(Do. I. 29)

I am dealing with his ideals of life in my later volume. I do not pursue this aspect further here. Nor shall I deal here with his artistic nature and his spirituality as I shall deal with these aspects also in that volume.

I shall however deal here at some length with his personal qualities and his varied and

wonderful learning. He was a man of remarkable modesty and urbanity and sweetness and serenity of soul. His modesty peeps forth throughout his early and mature work as is evident from the following verses :

क सूर्यप्रभवो वंशः क चालत्रिविषया मतिः।

तितीर्षुर्दुस्तरं मोहादुडुपेनाऽस्मि सागरम् ॥

मन्दः कवियशःप्रार्थी गमिष्याम्यपहास्यताम् ।

प्रांशुलभ्ये फले लोभादुद्धाहुरिव वामनः ॥

अथवा कृतावाग्द्वारे वंशेऽस्मिन्पूर्वसूरिभिः ।

मणौ वज्रसमुत्कर्णे सूत्रस्येवास्ति मे गतिः ॥

तं सन्तः श्रोतुमर्हन्ति सदमद्व्यक्तिहेतवः ।

हेमः संलक्ष्यते ह्यमौ विशुद्धिः श्यामिकाऽपि वा ॥

((Raghuvamsa I.)

प्रथितयशसां भाससौमिल्लकविपुत्रादीनां प्रबन्धानतिक्रम्य  
वर्तमानकवेः कालिदासस्य क्रियायां कथं परिषदो बहुमानः ।

Malavikagnimitra.

उपदेशं विदुः शुद्धं सन्तस्तमुपदेशिनः ।

श्यामायते न युष्मासु यः काञ्चनमिवाग्निषु ॥

Do.



आपरितोषाद्विदुषां न साधु मन्ये प्रयोगविज्ञानम् ।

बलवदपि शिक्षितानामात्मन्यप्रत्ययश्चेतः ॥

(Sakuntala)

At the same time he had self-respect and a high sense of the dignity of his art. In the following verse his words have a noble ring which contrasts [with the noble though boastful words of Bhavabhuti in the equally [well-known introductory verse in his *Malatimadhava* and which shows the difference in nature between the two mighty poets :

पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वं न चापि काव्यं नवमित्यवयम् ।

सन्तः परीक्ष्यान्यतरङ्गजन्ते मूढः परप्रत्ययनेयबुद्धिः ॥

Kalidasa was a man of wide and varied and even intensive learning. Some may think that the story that he became a poet by the grace of the Goddess is inconsistent with his having been a man of learning. But the grace which dowered him with poesy led him to poesy through learning. He was a master of Hindu secular and spiritual learning and is found in some respects to have surprisingly modern ideas and to have been far in advance of his times.

He was well-versed in scriptural lores in grammar, in rhetoric, and in philosophy. I shall discuss his knowledge of philosophy and æsthetics and poetics and dramaturgy in my later volume. The following verses may be referred to here by way of illustration:

प्रणवद्वन्द्वमामिव

(Raghuvamsa I, II)

श्रुते ख्यार्थं स्मृतिरन्वगच्छत्

Do. II, 2.

उद्भातः प्रणवो यामां न्याये स्त्रभिरुदीरणम् ।

कर्णयत्नः फलं स्वर्गस्तासां त्वं प्रमवो गिराम् ॥

Kumarasambhava II, 12.

मतां मतेन श्रद्धेव सौक्षाद्विनिोपपन्ना ।

Raghuvamsa II, 16.

अपवाद इवोत्सर्ग व्यावर्त्ता तुमोश्चरः ।

धातोः स्थान इवादेशं सुग्रीवं संन्यवेशयत् ।

Do. XII, 58.

अपवादैरिवोत्सर्गाः कृतव्यावृत्तयः रैः ॥

Kumarasambhava II. 27.

अपवादप्रयनार्थस्य धाताराधिविभावत् ।

Raghuvamsa XV. 9.

सूतावसूत संपन्नौ कोशदण्डाविव क्षितिः ।

Raghuvamsa XV. 13.

Kalidasa knew also many of the truths of geography and natural science. In the well-known verse.

सहस्रगुणमुत्सृष्टुमादत्ते हि रसं रविः

Raghuvamsa I. 18.

He shows that he knew how the sun draws water in the form of vapour and gives it back to the world as rain to dower the world with fruitfulness and sustain life. He says the same thing in Kumarasambhava, IV, 44.

रविपीतजलातपात्यये पुनरोधेन हि युज्यते नदी ।

In Raghuvamsa, XIII, 4 he says

गर्भं दधत्यर्कमरीचयोऽस्मात् ।

See also Canto X verse 58. The 12th verse in the first part of Meghasandesa runs thus

काले काले भवति भवतो यस्य संयोगमेव

क्षेहव्याक्तिश्चिरविरहजं मुखनी बाष्पमुष्णम् ॥

This shows how the poet knew that the first raindrops are warm on touching the heated earth. He knew also that in summer cold water

comes down the Ganges owing to the melting of the Himalayan snows.

गङ्गासरय्वार्जलमुष्णतप्तं हिमाद्रिनिष्यन्द इवावतीर्णः

Raghuvamsa XIV, 3.

He knew further that devastating fires increase the fertility of the soil :

कृष्यां दहन्नपि खलु क्षितिमिन्धनेद्वो

बीजप्ररोहजननीं ज्वलनः करोति ।

Do. IX. 80.

He speaks thus about the increase due to transplantation of seedlings

आपादपद्वयप्रगताः कलमा इव ते रघुम् ।

फलेः संवर्धयामासुरुखातप्रतिरोपिताः ॥

Do. IV. 37.

*Sakuntala* shows that the poet knew ancient law and the forms of ancient legal procedure. The following stanzas show his medical knowledge. He knew a serpent-bitten finger must be cut off to save the life of the man.

त्याज्यां दुष्टः प्रियोऽप्यासीदङ्गुलीबोरगक्षता ॥

Raghuvamsa I. 28.

तेन हि दंशच्छेदः पूर्वकर्मति श्रूयते । स तावदस्य क्रियताम्

च्छेदो दंशस्य दाहो वा क्षतेर्वा रक्तमोक्षणम् ।

एतानि दष्टमात्राणामायुषः प्रतिपत्तयः ॥

Malavikagnimitra Act IV, Verse 4.

Even more remarkable is Kalidasa's astronomical knowledge. His knowledge of the phenomenon of the rise of tides at moonrise is clear from the following verses.

चन्द्रप्रवृद्धोर्भिरिवोर्भिमाली ।

Raghuvamsa V. 61.

चन्द्रोदयारम्भ इवाम्बुराशिः

Kumarasambhava III, 67.

He knew that it was the sun's heat that kept life in bloom on the earth.

लोकेन चैन्यमिवोष्णाद्मेः ॥

Raghuvamsa V. 4.

He knew that it was the sun's glory that illuminates the lunar sphere and shines as the lunar glory. He knew also the cause of the waxing and the waning of the moon.

पुण्ये वृद्धिं हरिदश्वदीधितेरनुप्रवशादिव बालचन्द्रमाः ।

Do. II, 22.

करोण भानोर्वहुलावसाने संधुक्षमाणेव शशाङ्कोखा ।

Kumarasambhava VII, 8.

Thus he was quite as modern in his respect as when Shelley wrote two thousand years later

that "the moon had fed her exhausted form at the sunset's fire". That he knew the cause of the phenomena of amavasya (obscuration of the moon on new moon days) and of eclipses is clear from the following stanzas.

पर्वात्यये सोम इवाण्णरश्मेः ॥

Raghuvamsa VII, 33.

उपरागान्ते शशिनः समुपागता रोहिणीयोगम् ॥

Sakuntala VII, 22.

छाया हि भूमेः शशिनो मलत्वेनारोपिता शुद्धिमाः प्रजाभिः

Raghuvamsa XIV, 40.

अपर्वणि ग्रहकलुषेन्दुमण्डला

विभावरी कथय कथं भविष्यति ॥

Malavikagnimitra Act, IV, Verse 16.

The sun's apparent motion is thus referred to by him.

प्रययावातिथ्येषु वसन ऋषिकुलेषु सः ।

दक्षिणां दिशमृक्षेषु वार्षिकेद्विव भास्करः ॥

Raghuvamsa XII, 25.

The idea of Relativity has been very much to the fore in modern thought. Einstein's exposition of it has given it a new importance and a new application. The recent exposition

of it in Lord Haldane's great book on *The Reign of Relativity* has given a new intensiveness of meaning to its speculative applications and implications. My purpose here is not to expound the abstruse idea of relativity in all its manifoldness of application in the various realms of modern thought but only to point out its anticipation in one of the greatest and most ancient poets of India. I do not mean to suggest or state that Kalidasa knew the mathematical implications or the scientific evidences of the doctrine. But I certainly wish to show that having been dowered by nature with a keen imagination he was able to realise the truth in an imaginative way. Such poetic anticipations by later scientific achievements are not unknown in the west. Tennyson's description in *Locksley Hall* about the "nation's airy navies grappling in the central blue" was an anticipation of what happened long afterwards in the great world-war of 1914.

Lord Haldane gives us the following telling illustration in regard to the idea of relativity. "If a lady drops her parasol and it seems to her to be attracted by gravitation to the muddy pavement, it is not difficult, if we make an

effort to free ourselves from unconscious assumptions, to represent this adequately from another conceivable point of view. For an observer with a sufficiently powerful telescope, and himself at such a distance as to know nothing of any gravitational attraction from the earth, it might appear that the earth and the lady were moving upwards with an accelerating or increasing velocity, and that when the lady's parasol slipped out of her hand it at that moment lost its accelerating push, and relapsed into a rate of motion upwards that was uniform and without acceleration. In consequence it would be obvious to the distant observer that the accelerating pavement and the mud had overtaken it, instead of the parasol having descended to them. The approach in position would, for such a distant observer, with co-ordinates of reference other than those of the lady on the pavement, be one of the earth relatively to the parasol, while for the lady the change of position would be, according to her mundane co-ordinates, one of the parasol relatively to the pavement. In each case the phenomenon observed would be observed as it actually happened, and appear as it did simply



because of the special position of the observer. The relations described, whether spatial, as in direction and distance, or temporal, as concerned with time in the beginning and ending of the journey of the parasol, would depend on the standards of the observer for their reality, which would therefore be relative only”.

There are four stanzas in Kalidasa's works where we find his imaginative grasp of this matter. In the *Raghuvamsa* (canto XIII verse 48) the poet makes Sri Rama describe the distant Ganga as being still and shining as a pearl necklace on the breast of the earth. In canto XIII verse 18, he makes Sri Rama describe the appearance of the earth as he travels fast horizontally in the aerial car *Pushpaka* :

एषा ।वदूरीभवतः समुद्रान् सकानता निष्पततीव भूमिः ।

(The forest-belted earth looks as if it separates and flies away from the receding sea.)

The following verse in Act I of *Vikramorvasiya* also describes the swift forward movement of an aerial car :

अग्रे यान्ति रथस्य रेणुदर्वी चूर्णीभवन्तो घनाः

चक्रभ्रान्तिररान्तरेषु वितनोत्यन्यामिरावलीम् ।

चित्रारम्भविनिश्चलं हरिशिरस्यायामवधामरं

यन्मध्ये समवस्थितो ध्वजपटः प्रान्ते च वेगानिलात् ॥

The following verses in Sakuntala are equally well-known and important and worthy of note.

यदालोके सूक्ष्मं व्रजति सहसा तद्विपुलां

यदर्थे चिच्छिन्नं भवति कृतसंधानमिष तत् ।

प्रकृत्या यद्वक्रं तदपि समरेखं नयनयो-

र्न मे दूरे किञ्चित्क्षणमपि न पार्श्वे रथजवात् ॥

This verse describes the appearance of phenomena from a car swiftly moving along the surface of the earth. What seemed small suddenly becomes vast in size; what appeared bent or broken is seen to be continuous; what is really bent looks straight at a distance; what is far comes near and what is near swiftly recedes from view. The 7th Act contains the following remarkable verse :

शैलानामवरोहतीव शिखरादुन्मज्जतां मेदिनी

वर्णस्वास्तरलीनतां विजहति स्कन्धोदयात्पादपाः ।

सन्तानैस्तनुभावनष्टसलिला व्यक्तिं भजन्त्यापगाः

केनाध्युत्क्षिपतेव पश्य भुवनं मत्पार्श्वमानीयते ॥

This verse describes the appearance of the earth from a swift-descending aerial car. "The earth seems to flow down the sides of suddenly emerging hill-tops; the trees seem to shoot upwards emerging from their envelope of foliage; thin streaks of water broaden into broad rivers; and the earth seems to bound up towards me as if it were a ball thrown up by some one towards us". Matali hears this description and sees the sight and exclaims that the earth is vast and fair अहो उदाररमणीया पृथिवी. I do not think it necessary to compare this with the illustrations given above in Lord Haldane's work, as such a comparison will be obvious to all. I may in this connection draw attention to a similar description of the earth and the moon by two western poets of remarkable imaginative vision. Goethe says in the Prologue to his *Faust*.

"With speed, though baffling, unabating  
 Earth's splendour whirls in circling flight,  
 Its Eden brightness alternating  
 With solemn awe-inspiring might.

Ocean's broad waves in wild commotion  
 Against the rock's deep base are hurled,

And with the spheres both rock and ocean  
Eternally are swiftly hurled ”.

Rossetti sings thus about the moon in his  
*Blessed Damsel*.

“ The wild moon was like a little feather  
Fluttering far down the gulf ”.

Kalidasa's descriptions referred to above  
seem to me to be even more apt and striking  
and wonderful and show the power and ampli-  
tude of his mind.

I can go on giving further instances about  
Kalidasa's learning and knowledge and powers  
of natural observation but I do not think it  
necessary to do so. I have said enough to show  
that he had a wonderful extensiveness and  
intensiveness of mind, and that Kalidasa the  
man is as remarkable as Kalidasa the poet.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### Ritusamhara (The Seasons).

**T**HIS poem, like Thomson's *Seasons* is solely devoted to the delineation of the seasons. It, like *Meghasandesa* and *Vikramorvasiya*, shows Kalidasa's great originality as an inventor of new artistic *motifs* and literary forms. All the works of Kalidasa are steeped in natural loveliness but this poem is exclusively devoted to it. It is probably one of his earlier productions as it does not contain that power of maximum effect through minimum means which is so characteristic of his later works as of the later works of Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's earliest poems and even his earlier plays we find lavishness and redundancy which represent merely the riotous overflow of a rich, nay over-affluent, imagination. The very same traits are found also in the early poems of Kalidasa. But we find in it his most intimate and essential characteristics—his keen vision of nature's

beauties, his pervasive sensuousness, his power of illuminative simile, and his power of imaginative description.

When we compare Kalidasa's *Ritusamhara* with Thomson's *Seasons* we find how widely the genius of one poet differs from that of the other. Kalidasa's poem is the first poem in the world's literature devoted exclusively to the delineation of nature. Thomson wrote in a sophisticated age which had no keen love of nature. Though Kalidasa also wrote in a sophisticated age, he composed his poem in a land in which the beauty and sublimity of nature had entered deeply into human life. Further, Kalidasa has a more natural and instinctive and genuine and reverential love for nature than Thomson. Thomson's work is more eloquent and rhetorical but has less human interest and delicacy of touch. Mass effects are better described by him than by Kalidasa but individual effects are better brought out by Kalidasa.

When we compare Kalidasa's nature-poetry with the nature poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley and Keats and Tennyson, we shall be able to feel the special graces of his nature-

poetry well. I am doing this work in a later chapter and hence refrain from dilating on that matter here. I shall content myself by merely stating here that we do not find his nature-poetry instinct and alive with that overmastering sense of a divine presence—be it Thought or Love—animating nature and communing with our soul and kindling in it moods of calm or of ecstasy. Nor do we find in it that overpowering sensuousness which we find in Keat's treatment of nature or that sense of law and mystery which we find in Tennyson's nature-poetry. Kalidasa's treatment of nature is more emotional than spiritual or sensuous but it is very charming and attractive.

Mr. A. B. Keith says in his *Classical Sanskrit Literature*: "A work of his youth is certainly *Ritusamhara*, which has paid the penalty of juvenility by condemnation by modern, though not ancient, opinion as the product of some other hand. This view is plainly unsound, as was the former attempt to deny *Kalidasa* the *Malavikagnimitra* because of its inferiority to his other dramas. It is clear that *Vatsabhatti* used the poem, and this shows it to be of ancient date. It is perfectly true

that it falls short of the later poems in depth of poetic insight and feeling, but a comparison, for instance of Tennyson's early poems with the product of his mature years, shows precisely the same fact. The comparison is apposite, for Tennyson is precisely a parallel to Kalidasa; both are poets not so much of inspiration and genius, as of perfect accomplishment based on a high degree of talent.....No deep feeling, it is true, marks the poem, but it is distinguished by a profound sympathy with the life of nature and an admirable power of describing in pregnant brevity the aspects of Indian scenery and life". This passage contains true and clever and acute criticism but it errs in classing Kalidasa with Tennyson. Kalidasa is a poet of inspiration and genius, nay, is a universal poet. Tennyson is second-rate as an epic poet and as a dramatist, though he excels in lyric and elegiac poetry, and is a consummate artist in style. Kalidasa is great all round and is one of the world's greatest artists in style. Mr. Ryder says well: "It might even be said that those rare and happy centuries that see a man as great as Homer or Virgil or Kalidasa or Shakespeare partake in that one man of a renaissance". He points out also that



Kalidasa was a highly educated and learned man and that "in this respect he is rather to be compared with Milton and Tennyson than with Shakespeare or Burns", and that "he was completely a master of his learning". I would rather compare him with Goethe who also was a universal poet, who was a master of learning but was not mastered by learning, and who combined grace and massiveness. Mr. Ryder points out how Kalidasa harmonised and at the same time transfigured the life of nature and the life of man and how he was as supreme a poet of nature as he was a poet of the human heart. In fact Kalidasa combined in an exquisite way perfection of form and high intellectual power and emotional intensity and radiant imagination and a fine and pervasive spiritual quality. To quote from Mr. Ryder again: "Poetical fluency is not rare; intellectual grasp is not very uncommon: but the combination has not been found perhaps more than a dozen times since the world began. Because he possessed this harmonious combination, Kalidasa ranks not with Anacron and Horace and Shelley, but with Sophocles, Virgil, and Milton".

The doubt cast on Kalidasa's authorship of

the poem is an utterly untenable doubt. Mallinatha did not comment upon it evidently because of its simplicity and because he confined his attention to the major works of the poet. The later writers on poetics do not quote from it because they had an abundance of material in the poet's longer and more mature poems and plays.

The first canto deals with summer (*Nidagha*).

The summer is described as a season of fierce solar heat and desirable lunar light, of waters incessantly resorted to by bathers, and of sweet evenings. Fountains play and scatter spray and spread coolness all around. Crystal flooring and sandal paste increase the coolness. Fragrance and music abound everywhere. Youthful maidens in light silks and radiant jewels add to the sweetness of the season. The moon's pallor becomes more pronounced on seeing the surpassing beauty of their face and form. The deer roam about in search of water. The serpent fainting with heat curls itself up in the shadow cast by peacock's body. The lions do not attack the elephants which enter ponds in search of coolness. The birds feel

faint on the leafless trees. The boars and bison roam wildly in search of water. The forests are aflame with forest-fires. With lovely maids and melodious music on golden terrace-floors they spend the nights of summer in which the waters smile with lotuses, which is fragrant with the odours of Patala flowers, and in which it is sweet to bathe and to seek cool moon-beams and garland of flowers. The following are a few of the fine stanzas in the poem :

प्रचण्डसूर्यः स्पृहणीयचन्द्रमाः  
 सदावगाहंश्नवारिसंचयः ।  
 दिनान्तरस्योऽभ्युपशान्तमन्मथो  
 निदाघकालोऽयमुपागतः प्रिये ॥

पटुतरदवदाहोच्छुष्कसस्यप्ररोहाः  
 परुषपवनवेगोत्क्षिप्तसंशुष्कपर्णाः ।  
 दिनकरपरितापक्षीणतोयाः समन्ता-  
 द्विदधति भयमुच्चैर्वीक्ष्यमाणा वनान्ताः ॥

कमलवनचिताम्बुः पाटलामोदरस्यः  
 सुखसलिलनिषेकः सेव्यचन्द्रांशुद्वारः ।  
 व्रजतु तव निदाघः कामिनीभिः समेतो  
 निशि सुललितगीते हर्म्यपृष्ठे सुखेन ॥

The second canto deals with the rainy season, (*Varsha*). The season is regal in its coming, as the clouds are like elephants and the lightning is like the royal flag and the thunder sounds like the royal drum. The sky is full of clouds of diverse degrees of darkness, shining like the Nilotpala flower and like collyrium. The Chataka birds seek the gracious drops of rain. With thunder as drum, with rainbow as bow and lightning as bowstring, and with showers of rain as arrows, the season assails the hearts of those who are away from their beloved wives. With shining grass and attractions the earth shines like a beautiful maiden. On hearing the sound of thunder the peacocks dance with gorgeous tails outspread. The swollen rivers rush like love-maddened maidens, to the sea, uprooting the trees on the banks by the force of their turbid waters. In such dark and rainy nights lover-seeking maidens go to their places of assignation, their way being lighted up by the glows of lightning. Even faulty lovers are forgiven by maidens frightened by the flashing lightning and the rolling thunder. The wives of men who are far away stand in such nights disconsolate with tearful eyes and unadorned persons. The bees

abandon the flowerless lotus pond and seek the outspread tails of the dancing peacocks deeming that flowers have blossomed there. The rain-gladdened forest seems to smile with blossomed flowers. The wind-shaken boughs make us feel that the forest is dancing in joy. The season, like a lover, decks maidens with flowers. The following are some of the fine verses in this canto which says at the end: "that the rainy season—which has many graces and fascinates the minds of maidens and is the friend of parched trees and creepers and is the life of all—fulfil all thy desires".

ससीकराम्भोधरमत्तकुञ्जर-

स्तद्धित्यताकोऽशनिशब्दमर्दलः ।

समागतो राजवदुद्धन्नुति-

घनागमः कामिजनेप्रियः प्रिये ॥

बलाहकाश्चाशनिशब्दमर्दलाः

सुरेन्द्रचापं दधतस्तडिद्रुणम् ।

सुतीक्ष्णधारापतनोप्रसायकै-

स्तुदन्ति चेतः प्रसन्नं प्रवासिनाम् ॥

सदा मनोज्ञं स्वनदुत्सवोत्सुकं

विकीर्णविस्तीर्णकलमशोभितम् ।

ससंभ्रमालिङ्गनचुम्बनाकुलं

प्रवृत्तनृत्यं कुलमद्य बर्हिणाम् ॥

निरातयन्तः परितस्तटदुःमा-

न्प्रवृद्धवेगैः सलिलैरनिर्मलैः ।

स्त्रियः सुदुष्टा इव जानिविभ्रमाः

प्रयान्ति नद्यस्त्वरितं पयोनिधिम् ॥

विलोचनेन्दीवरवारिविन्दुभि-

र्निषिक्तबिम्बाघरचारुपद्माः ।

निरस्तमाल्याभरणानुलेरनाः

स्थिता निराशाः प्रमदाः प्रवासिनाम् ॥

विषलपुष्पां नलिनीं समुत्सुका

विहाय भृङ्गाः श्रुतिहारिनिस्वनाः ।

पतन्ति मूढाः शिखिनां प्रनृत्यतां

कलापचक्रेषु नवोत्पलाशया ॥

मुदित इव कदम्बैर्जातपुष्पैः समन्ता-

त्पवनचकितशाखैः शाखिभिर्नृत्यतीव ।

हसितमिव विधत्ते सूचिभिः केतकीनां

नवसलिलनिषेकच्छिन्नतापो वनान्तः ॥

शिरसि बकुलमालां मालतीभिः समेतां

विकसितनवपुष्पैर्युथिकाकुट्टमलैश्च ।

त्रिकचनवकदम्बैः कर्णपूरं वधूनां  
रचयति जलदौघः कान्तवत्काल एषः ॥

बहुगुणरमणीयः कामिनीचित्तहारी  
तरुव्रिटपलतानां बान्धवो निर्विकारः ।  
जलदसमय एष प्राणिनां प्राणभूते  
दिशतु तव द्वितानि प्रायशो बाञ्छितानि ॥

The third canto describes Autumn (*Sarat*). Autumn comes like a new bride. Her dress is the blossomed *Kasa*; her face is the lotus; the sound of her anklet is the voice of the swan; and her body is the ripened corn. The season envelops the world in whiteness by fitting the earth with *Kasa* flowers, the nights with moonbeams., the streams with swans, the ponds with *Kumuda* flowers, the forests with *saptaparna* trees in flower and the gardens with *Malati* blossoms. The sky with its wind-tossed white clouds looks like a king fanned by yak-tail fans. The sky is dark-blue like collyrium; the earth is red with *bandhooka* flowers; and lotus blossoms abound everywhere. The night, like a young girl, shines with her moonface free from the veil of cloud and decked with radiant jewel-like stars and dressed in the white silk of moonlight. The

breeze shakes the hearts of youth when it shakes the grain-laden stalks and makes the blossomed boughs dance with joy and causes the lotus flowers to have a jocund dance. The rainbow and the lightning are seen no more. The lovely gait of maidens is conquered by the swans; the beauty of their faces is vanquished by the loveliness of the lotus flowers; their loving glances are thrown into the shade by Neelotpala flowers; and their sportive eyebrows are surpassed by playful rivulets. The cloudless blue sky with its moon and stars shines like the lovely tank filled with emerald waters and radiant with the *Kumuda* flowers and swans. The breeze is cool; the sky is clear and cloudless; the waters are clear; and the moon and the stars light up the universe. May your minds be gladdened by the autumnal season with her lotus face and Neelotpala eyes and *Kasa* garment! The following fine stanzas may be remembered.

काशांशुका विकचपद्ममनोज्ञवक्त्रा

सोन्मादहंसरवनूपुरनादरम्या ।

आपकशालिरुचिरा तनुगात्रयष्टिः

प्राप्ता शरन्नवधूरेव रूपरम्या ॥



ठ्योम कचिद्रजतशङ्खमृणालगौरैः

स्यक्ताम्बुमिलैघृतया शतशः प्रयातः ।

संलक्ष्यते पवनवेगचलेः पयोदै-

राजं चामरवरैरुपवीज्यमानः ॥

तारागणप्रवरभूषणमुद्वहन्ती

मेघावरोधपरिमुक्तशशाङ्कवक्त्रा ।

ज्योत्स्नादुकूलममलं रजनी दधाना

वृद्धिं प्रयात्यनुदिनं प्रमदव बाला ॥

आकम्पयन्फलभरानतशालिजाला-

नानर्त्यस्तरुवरान्कुसुमावनम्रान् ।

उत्फुल्लपङ्कजवनां नलिनीं विधुन्व-

न्यूनां मनश्चलयति प्रमम नमस्व न् ॥

हंसैर्जिता सुललिता गतिरङ्गनाना-

मम्भोरुहैर्विकमितैर्मुखचन्द्रकानिः ।

नीलोत्पलैर्मदकलानि विलोकयन्

भ्रूविभ्रमाश्च रुचिरास्तनुभिस्तरुणैः ॥

स्फुटकुमुदचितानां राजहंसस्थितानां

मरकतमाणिसासा वाग्निभाषणानाम् ।

प्रियमनिशयरूपां ठ्योम नेयाग्र्यानां

बहति विगतमेघं चन्द्रतारावकीर्णम् ॥

शरदि कुमदसंगाद्वायवो वान्ति शीता  
 विगतजलदवृन्दा दिग्विभागा मनोज्ञाः ।  
 विगतकल्वमम्भः श्यानपङ्खा धरित्री  
 विमलकिरणचन्द्रं व्योम ताराविचित्रम् ॥

विकचकमलवक्त्रा फुल्लनीलोत्पलाक्षी  
 विकभितनवकाशश्चेतवासो वसना ।  
 कुमुदरुचिरकान्तिः कामिनीबोन्मदेयं  
 प्रतिदिशतु शरदश्चेतसः प्रीतिमप्रयाम् ॥

We now come to the canto describing Winter (*Hemanta*). The lodhra trees are in bloom. The corn is ripe. The lotus is not to be seen. There is falling snow everywhere. Maidens discard their silken garments. They dry their tresses with fragrant smoke. The icicles are like the teardrops shed by the season for causing discomfort to women. The tanks shine with clear waters which are radiant with excited swans and blossomed Neelotpala flowers. The snow-ripened Priyangu creeper is pale like a love-lorn maid. Lovers sleep in close embrace, their mouths perfumed with flower-fragrant wine and their persons odorous with scented breath. The maidens seek the

morning sun after the love-vigils of the night. May you have bliss in this snowy season which has many good traits, which fascinates the minds of maids and inclines them to love, in which the villagers are eager about their ripe harvests, which is always sweet to the mind, and in which the Krauncha birds abound in activity. The following are some of the fine stanzas in this canto :

नवप्रवालोद्गमसस्यरम्यः प्रफुल्लोद्भ्रः परिपक्वशालिः ।

विलीनपद्मः प्रपतन्नुषारो हेमन्तकालः समुपागतोऽयम् ॥

प्रफुल्लनोलोत्पलशोभितानि सोन्मादकादम्बविभूषितानि ।

प्रसन्नतोयानि सुशीतलानि सरांसि चेतांसि हरन्ति पुंसाम् ॥

पाकं व्रजन्ती हिमजातशीतै-

राधूयमाना सततं मरुद्भिः ।

प्रिये प्रियङ्गुः प्रियविप्रयुक्ता

त्रिपाण्डुतां याति विलासिनीव ॥

पुष्पासवामोदिसुगन्धिवक्त्रो

निःश्वासवातैः सुरभीकृताङ्गः ।

परस्पराङ्गव्यतिरिक्तगथी

शेते जनः कामरसानुबिद्धः ॥

बहुगुगरमणीयो योषितां चित्तहारी

परिणतबहुशालिन्याकुलप्रामसीमा ।

सततमतिमनोहः क्रौञ्चमालापरीतः

प्रदिशतु हिमयुकः कारु एषः सुखं वः ॥

The next canto describes the season of Dew ( *Sisira* ). It is beautiful with gathered harvests, screaming *Krounchas*, and intensive love. The windows are shut. The help of fire and sun and heavy garments and maiden's warm embraces is sought. Sandal and moon and terrace and breeze are abandoned. None stirs out in nights bright with snow and star. With betel and wine and perfume-censers maidens enter their halls of sleep. They forget and forgive the errors and defects of their lovers. May the dewy season wherein sweet viands are enjoyed, and love is sweet to the united and bitter to the separated lovers, and which is sweet with ripe corn and sugarcane confer happiness on you. The following noteworthy verses occur in this canto :

प्ररूढशाल्यं शुचैर्भनोहरं

कचित्स्थितकौञ्चनिनादराजितम् ।

प्रकामकामं प्रमदाजनप्रियं

वरोरु कालं शिशिराह्वयं शृणु ॥

निरुद्धवातायनमन्दिरोदरं

हुताशनो भानुमतो गभस्तयः ।

गुरुणि वासांस्यबलाः सयौवनाः

प्रयान्ति कालेऽत्र जनस्य सेव्यताम् ॥

प्रचुरगुडविकारः स्वादुशालीक्षुरम्यः

प्रवत्सुरतकेलिर्जातकंदर्पदर्पः ।

प्रियजनरहितानां चित्तसंतापहेतुः

शिशिरसमय एष श्रेयसे वोऽस्तु नित्यम् ॥

We now come to Spring beloved of the poets in general and of Kalidasa in particular. The Gita says that Spring is God's special manifestation among the seasons ऋतूनां कुसुमाकरः. Aravinda Ghose thinks that the poet's poem on Summer is fine, that there is a falling off in the next two cantos which however have more finish if less vigour, that the next cantos are poor, and that the poem on Spring is not superb and supreme but is a failure. I have shown above how the first five cantos maintain the same high level; and all of them have the same drawbacks and merits. In the poem on Spring which Ghose well calls "the royal season of the Indian year" Kalidasa is at his best as it is full of colour and perfume and sweetness in which

he delights. The warrior Spring is come with  
 the mango blossom as his sharp arrow, and  
 with crowds of bees as the bowstring of his  
 sugarcane-bow to pierce the hearts of men and  
 maids. Everything is fair—the trees are fair  
 with flowers, the ponds with lotuses, the  
 maidens with amorous passion, the winds with  
 perfume, the evenings with bliss, and the days  
 with beauty. The God of Spring confers auspiciousness (*Saubhagya*) on tanks with gem-set  
 steps and moon faced maidens and blossomed  
 mango trees. Scarlet garments are seen everywhere. The *Karnikara* flower attains a new  
 loveliness in the maiden's ear; the *asoka* blossom  
 has a new glory in her dark tresses; and the  
*mallika* flower attains a new splendour on their  
 persons. Sandal paste shines on their breasts;  
 and bracelets and wristlets and belts shine on  
 their arms and hips. Their frames have a new  
 glow of loveliness and their hearts have a new  
 glow of love. Light silken garments are worn  
 by them. The male cuckoo drunk with the  
 honey of the mango bloom kisses his beloved;  
 and the male bee in the lotus flower hums his  
 love to the object of his passion. The wind-  
 shaken mango tree with light-red tender leaves  
 and sweet flowers fires the hearts of maids with

amatory passion. The Asoka with its wealth of red blossoms fill the hearts of youth with love's *soka* (melancholy). The earth, with *kimsuka* groves which are in bloom and look like trees on fire, shines like a red-garmented bride. Have not the *kimsuka* trees, shining like the beaks of parrots, and the *Karnikara* trees in bloom caused pain to lovers already? Yet cuckoos with sweet-tones add to the pain. Shaking the blossomed mango trees and spreading the sweet tones of the cuckoo everywhere, the springtide breeze, free from the cold of snow, blows as it likes, ravishing and bearing away the hearts of men. The gardens are sweet with *Kumuda* flowers which are white like the laughter of women. They fascinate even the passionless hearts of saints. What then about the passionate hearts of youth? The separated lovers, on seeing the blossomed and odorous mango trees, shut their eyes and noses and weep and grieve. May happiness be bestowed on you by the world-conquering God Kama (Cupid) who is accompanied by the God of Spring, whose supreme arrow is the mango bloom, whose bow is the palasa flower, whose bowstring is a string of bees, whose royal white umbrella is the radiant moon, whose rutted elephant is the fragrant south wind, and

who has got the cuckoos as the hymners of his glory. The following are some of the finest poems in this canto :

प्रफुल्लचूताङ्कुरतीक्ष्णसायको द्विरेफमालाविलसद्वनुर्गुणः ।  
मनांसि वेदधुं सुरतप्रसङ्गिनां वसन्तयोद्धा समुपागतः प्रिये ॥

द्रुमाः सपुष्पाः मलिलं सपद्मं स्त्रियः सकामाः पवनः सुगन्धिः ।  
सुखाः प्रदोषा दिवसाश्च रम्याः सर्वं प्रिये चारुतरं वसन्ते ॥

पुंस्कोकिलश्चूतरसासवेन मत्तः प्रियां चुम्बति रागहृष्टः ।  
कूजद्विरेफोऽप्ययमम्बुजस्थः प्रियं प्रियायाः प्रकरोति चाटु ॥

आ मूलतो विद्रुमरागताम्रं सपल्लवाः पुष्पचयं दधानाः ।  
कुर्वन्त्यशोका हृदयं सशोकं निरीक्ष्यमाणा नवयौवनानाम् ॥

आदीप्तवह्निमदृशैर्मरुतावधूनैः  
सर्वत्र किंशुकवनैः कुसुमावनम्रैः ।  
सद्यो वसन्तसमये हि समाचितेयं  
रक्तांशुका नवबधूरिव भाति भूमिः ॥

आकम्पयन्कुसुमिताः सहकारशाखा  
विस्तारयन्परभृतस्य वचांसि दिक्षु ।  
वायुर्विवाति हृदयानि हरन्नराणां  
नीहारपातविगमात्सुभगो वसन्ते ॥



आन्नीमञ्जुलमञ्जरी वरशरः सत्किशुकं यद्वनु-  
 ज्या यस्यालिकुलं कलङ्कहितं छत्रं सितांशुः सितम् ।  
 मत्तेभो मलयानिलः परभृतो यद्वन्दिनो लोकजि-  
 त्सोऽयं वो वितरीतरीतु वितनुर्भद्रं वसन्तान्वितः ॥

Mr. Ryder says: "The description is not objective, but deals with the feelings awakened by each season in a pair of young lovers. Indeed, the poem might be called a Love's Calendar." This is in my opinion a wrong estimate. The poem has both objective and subjective elements. It has its merits and defects but it does not make nature a mere annexure to human feeling. It is of great beauty and is in the characteristic vein of Kalidasa. It has got a great exuberance of sensuousness and abounds in fine pictures and rich imagery expressed in simple and attractive and melodious language. Professor Macdonnell says: "With glowing descriptions of the beauties of Nature, in which erotic scenes are interspersed, the poet adroitly interweaves the expression of human emotions. Perhaps no other work of Kalidasa's manifests so strikingly the poet's deep sympathy with nature, his keen powers of observation and his skill in depicting an Indian landscape in vivid

and glowing colours". Nature can be loved for itself or for its spiritual appeal or its responsiveness to our emotional needs. The fact that in Kalidasa's Nature poetry we do not see mass effects, or a sense of the spiritual message of Nature to our soul should not justify us in rejecting it as an inferior artistic achievement. It is true also that we do not find in him that minute observation of nature or that scientific accuracy which delights in Tennyson and some other modern poets. To Kalidasa, as to Shakespeare, Nature was largely a frame for the mounting of his picture of human love. He surrounds with Nature's phenomena the drama of human life. The appeal of Nature to him, as to Shakespeare, is emotional rather than intellectual or spiritual. At the same time the general aspects of Nature are not forgotten by him. There is also the pervasive presence of his power of illuminative simile and his talent of concentrated expression of original ideas and fancies. It may be said that all the six cantos are full of descriptions of lovely women and that woman is a little too much in the foreground and nature a little too much in the background. But we must remember that the aim of Kalidasa is to link Nature to human life

not by the link of intellect or the link of the spirit but by the link of emotion. In the emotional treatment of nature as responsive to human feeling, love can never be absent but must be necessarily in the foreground of poetic description. That is the reason why, while endeavouring to depict various outward aspects and phases of Nature as they are in themselves, the poet tries again and again to describe how each season affects the love-moods of lovers in union and in separation. We must not seek in the poem for what is not meant to be there and what is not there. But we must admire it for its variety of positive achievement in its aim of presenting to us

“Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eve by haunted stream”





## CHAPTER IX.

### **Kumarasambhava.**

*Kumarasambhava* or *the Birth of the War-God* is an epic poem in seventeen cantos and contains 1096 stanzas. The story of the poem was taken by Kalidasa from the Siva Purana and the Skanda Purana and other Puranas and Itihasas. While the story of Rama had been rendered in a peerless form by a great poetic genius, the story of Skanda had not been so handled before Kalidasa's time. Kalidasa could hence give the reins to his constructive and pictorial imagination. The subject enabled him to combine grand descriptions of nature and beautiful delineations of love, to bring near to us by the attractive gravitational force of his genius what was far off in time and in space, and to inspire us by a suggestive representation and idealisation of the Indian concept of heroism.

Epic poetry requires large canvas and heroic figures and an amplitude and intensiveness of light and shade, and confers on the readers a

higher range of mind and a more ardent and passionate purity of heart and a thrilled dilatation of soul. An authentic epic will be in touch with the folk-spirit and will try to sum up the great racial concepts of life here and hereafter. It will deal with a heroic age and a glorious theme with intensity and conviction. It will not aim at inventing a story but will take up the epic material stored in the national mind and sublimate it by a new artistic sense of values and beauties and joys in life and by high symbolism and true artistic significance and purposiveness. More than anything else it must turn upon the doing of persons of high heroism of soul. It has been well said:—  
“A story weighted with epic purpose could not proceed at all, unless it were expressed in persons big enough to support it”. Further an epic will employ super-natural machinery as a means of elevation of feeling.

In Homer we have the idealisation of courage but we have not got high spiritual exaltation. In Virgil we have a luxurious dreaming about the legendary origin of the Roman race. In *Cid* we have an idealisation of loyalty. In Dante we have a great poem on

hell and heaven but the earthly interest is slight and theology impedes the soaring wings. In Milton we have an exalted and sonorous poem on a high and noble theme i.e. the origin and fall of man but he is weighed down by the Biblical narrative. He fails in his delineation of Heaven and has made Satan more interesting than God. The two great epics of India are of a supreme elevation and attractiveness. The *Ramayana* has been called the Epic of the household. The *Mahabharata* has been described as the epic of civil and political life. They are at the same time descriptive of the highest human ideals of Santi and Bhakti and Moksha as revealed to man by incarnate God-head by precept and example.)

Kalidasa had to strike out a path of his own to avoid treading the way already trodden by the cohorts of sublime ideas expressed in the two immortal epics of Valmiki and Vyasa. In his *Kumarasambhava* and *Raghuvamsa* he chose two great and exalted themes and dealt with them in a new and original epic manner by adding the graces and resources of condensed and delectable poetic expression to a heavenly story and a story of men of true kingliness of

soul. We can never realise the originality of his poetic aim and epic method unless we compare his epic stories with their prototypes as found in older materials. He belonged to a later and more cultured and sophisticated age than theirs. But his epics, though they are national epics like their works, are not mere artificial pseudo-epic poems which are merely narrative poems. They have the true epic note as he belonged to a heroic age and they combine epic sublimity with poetic beauty.

The epic poem starts with one of the most suggestive and imaginative and magnificent verses in language. "In the northern quarter there is the deity-ensouled King of mountains named Himalaya, which, spanning both the eastern and western oceans, remains like the measuring-rod of the entire earth." The Indian civilisation is the gift — nay, the child — of the Himalayas. The epic poem which is a poem of Indian heroism naturally begins with a splendour of description of the Himalaya. The poet speaks of the mountain-range as ensouled by divinity. (He hints further that the Indian civilisation is the standard — the measuring-rod—in respect of universal culture.)

The magnificent description then proceeds with true epic amplitude and sublimity. All the brightest gems and life-saving medicinal herbs are found in the mountain-range. The very quintessence of earthly gifts is there. As the mountain is the birthplace of countless precious stones its perennial snow is no blot on its loveliness. One defect amidst a multitude of virtues is lost like the dark spot in the rays of the moon. It shines with many glorious tints like the evening clouds. The Siddhas who enjoy life on its slopes fly up to its sunlit peaks when the highest clouds reach up to its slopes. The speeding tempests fill the holes in its bamboo clusters with shrill harmonies. Its shining herbs give forth unlit and inextinguishable radiance during night. Its dark caves are the hunts of owls. The *Chamara* deer run about waving their tails and seem to fan King Himalaya with yak-tail fans which are the insignia of royalty. The Creator, seeing its value for sacrifices and its protective power, made it the monarch of all mountains.

King Himalaya married Mena and had a son named Mainaka. Their next child was the goddess who is the Mother of the Universe.



Her earlier incarnation was Dakshayani and she was then the spouse of God Siva. She abandoned her form by means of *Yoga* and took birth as the daughter of Himalaya. At her birth sweet and dustless airs spread joy all around; conch-shells were sounded in heaven and celestial flowers were showered on the earth; and the whole universe felt a sudden thrill of bliss. She grew like the crescent moon. She was named Parvati and Uma. By her birth the Himalaya was both purified and beautified as a lamp by a flame and as the universe by the Ganga and as a wise man by disciplined speech. During her education, all the sciences which she knew in her former incarnation sought her just as the swans seek the Ganga in autumn and as the innate splendours of lucent medicinal plants seek it when night-time comes.

Then she attained the season of maidenhood which is an unartificial ornament to the frame, which is a non-vinous intoxicant of the senses and the mind, and which is Cupid's arrow different from and higher than his flower-arrows. Her frame was invested with beauty by youth and shone like a picture touched up by the brush and like a lotus opened by the solar rays.

Her feet shone like moving lotuses; her gait was like that of the swan; her legs and thighs were well-made and plump and fair; her arms were full of softness of curve and sweetness of tint; they were softer than flowers and were hence the means by which Cupid vanquished God Siva when his own flower-arrows failed; her breasts were the ornaments of her ornaments; the goddess of beauty who could not feel the splendour of the moon in the lotus or the perfume of the lotus in the moon began to reside in the face of Uma which had the splendour of the moon and the perfume of the lotus; her smile lighting up her lips looked like the co-appearance of leaf and flower or of coral and pearl; when she spoke with her ambrosial voice, even the cuckoo's tones seemed harsh like a Veena with broken strings; her timid and bashful glances were like those of startled fawns; her eyebrows excelled Cupid's bow in loveliness; in short she was created by the Creator with the quintessential loveliness of all the lovely things in the universe.

One day the sage Narada came to King Himalaya. Seeing Uma by her father's side, he predicted that she would become the spouse

of God Siva and become one-half of His divine form. Himalaya did not think of any one but God Siva as Uma's lord, for, which glory but the sacred Fire can receive the sacred oblation ? But he could not bring himself to make a direct request of God Siva lest his request should meet with rejection.

Ever since the disappearance of Dakshayani, God Siva lived a lonely and spouseless life and began to practise penance on the Himalayas. Then King Himalaya left Uma with her companions to serve the austere God. But God Siva was unmoved by the transcendental loveliness of Uma and was immersed in his austere penance. But she continued to render sacred service to him. Her fatigue was soothed by the rays from the moon on the God's head, and she delighted in her service.

At this time the gods who had been troubled by the demon Taraka beyond forbearance went to Brahma the creator. Indra led the deputation and Brihaspati was their spokesman. Brihaspati said: "We bow to you who wert self-existent in glory before the creation and who became the Trinity afterwards to rule

and guide the three Gunas (cosmic principles). On the cosmic waters you scattered the seed of life from which the manifested world has taken shape. You took a male form and a female form and became the parents of the world. Your sleep and waking cause the dissolution and the creation of the universe. You are the causeless cause and the deathless death and the kingless king of the universe. You are the source of the Vedas; you are both (Prakriti and Purusha)". This hymn in the second canto is one of the noblest in all literature. Brahma replied: "Why have you all come together! Why has the glory of your faces faded like stars seen through mist. Though I have created the world, its protection is in your hands." Then Brihaspati told him about their troubles and requested him to create a Commander-in-chief of the armies of the Gods to fight the demons and restore victory to the heavenly arms. Brahma replied: "It was I that gave a boon to Taraka. (Even a poisonous tree is not fit to be cut down by the hand which planted it.) Only God Siva's son can save you. God Siva is the Supreme Light shining beyond darkness. Even God Vishnu and I cannot

know His full glory : Try to charm His mind by Uma's loveliness. Their child will bring you Victory". The Creator then disappeared from their view.

The third canto also is one of the finest poems in literature. Indra went back to heaven and thought of God Kama (Cupid). Kama appeared at once and asked him : " What do you wish me to do ? Shall I break the penance of any ascetic aspiring to thy heavenly seat ? I shall make him give up the path to liberation and shall imprison him in the coy glances of lovely women. Whose wealth and righteousness shall I overthrow with love of sexual pleasure ? Do you wish any beautiful maiden denying your love to seek you with love ? I shall overcome even God Siva on your account and to please you." Indra replied : " I know your prowess. My weapon Vajra (thunderbolt) is powerless before penance. But thy shalt overthrow even penance. I wish you to conquer God Siva's penance and make him love Uma. Your friend, the God of Spring (Vasanta), will go with you." Then God Kama and his wife Rati went with God Vasanta to the place of God Siva's penance.

A sudden and radiant and perfumed spring spread delight everywhere. When the sun began to go to the goddess of the North the fragrant south wind blew gently like the love-laden sigh of the goddess of the South. The Asoka burst into unusual bloom. The mango trees were full of tender leaves and flowers. The cuckoo with his voice sweetened by the eating of tender mango shoots sent out his liquid notes summoning all to the pleasures of love. The Beauty of the Season had the bee as her forehead-mark and touched her mango-leaf lip with a brighter tint. Amatory passion fired all hearts. Even creepers hugged trees in a closer embrace. But the place of God Siva's penance was unaltered in the least. The trees were moveless; the birds and bees were voiceless; and the whole hermitage looked like a painted scene. God Kama beheld God Siva in dismay. God Siva sat in meditation like a rainless cloud and a waveless sea and a lamp set in a windless spot. This contrasted picture is one of the most picturesque and magnificent portions in the poem.

Cupid was overcome with despondency and fear when he saw God Siva in meditation un-

mindful of the Spring and the glory of beauty and of love. His bow and arrows slipped from his hands without his knowledge. At that moment Uma came there with two forest-goddesses as if with the object of fanning by her beauty his heroism into flame. She wore spring flowers which were fairer than rubies and gold and pearls. She looked, in her crimson dress, like a blossomed creeper. Her belt of Kesara flowers looked like a second bow of Cupid. She was waving off with a lotus flower the intrusive bee which hovered near her red lips attracted by the perfumed sweetness of her breath. At that time God Siva came down from the plane of meditation into his ordinary consciousness. Uma scattered flowers at his feet and bowed low before him. God Siva blessed her saying: "May you have as your husband one who will not care for any other woman!" At that time Cupid fixed to his bow the shaft called *sammohana* (the fascinator). God Siva felt his fixity of thought to be in a wavering slate and was agitated a little like the sea at moonrise, and looked at Uma's fair face. Uma also expressed her longing by her coy and averted looks. God Siva then restrain-

ed himself and turned round to see who caused such agitation of mind. He saw God Cupid about to loosen his shaft from his bent bow. A sudden flash of flame shot forth from his third eye in his forehead. The gods shouted out: "O Lord! Calm thy anger." But in a moment the flame reduced Cupid to ashes. God Siva at once disappeared. Uma went back in shamefaced sorrow and was taken by Himalaya to his palace.

Then follows the fourth canto which is one of the masterpieces of literature. It contains the lament of Kama's wife Rati. She fell into a swoon and then woke up and broke into a heart-rending lament. She cried and said: "You who wert the archetype and exemplar of all beauty in the universe art gone and yet I live and do not go to pieces. How hard is woman's heart! You have gone like a rushing flood tossing me aside like a flower. We had not a moment's harshness. Yet why do you hide yourself? Or do you remember any playful chastisement by me? You said often that I dwelt in your heart. How could you then be burnt and yet I be whole? I shall in a moment follow thee who had just started for a new



world. But the whole universe has been shattered by God, for all joy is thy gift. Who, in thy absence, can lead the feet of maidens to their yearning lovers? The moon who is your friend will know that his rising is vain in your absence and will not care to round his thin crescent into fulness. To whom will the mango blossom become as arrow? The bees, which you will no longer use as your bowstring, lament with me. Wake up, my lord. Teach the sweet-toned cuckoo how to be a messenger of love. Thy decoration on my person is seen but thou art not to be seen. Through the gate of flame I will fly to thee. What became of thy friend the God of Spring? Has he too been reduced to ashes?" Then Vasanta appeared before her. Seeing him she broke into a passion of grief, because sorrow is intense at sight of friends. She said: "My lord! Will you not relent at least for the sake of your friend Vasanta. Love may be inconstant but friendship is steadfast. O Vasanta! Your friend has gone like an extinguished flame. I survive like a wick. The moonlight disappears with the moon; and the lightning vanishes with the cloud. Even inanimate things show me my way. I shall, embra-

“ing my lord’s ashes, lie on a bed of flame as on a bed of flowers. When you offer your exequial gift of water, give both of us but one handful because he will never drink apart from me. Offer us mango blossoms as they were dear to him”. Suddenly she heard an aerial voice declare: “Forbear! You will be united to your lord again. When God Siva marries Uma, he would restore your husband’s form and life”

The fifth canto is one of the most beautiful poems in all literature. It describes Uma’s penance. (Uma censured her fruitless loveliness because the fruit of beauty is love.) She yearned to make her beauty fruitful by penance. Her mother dissuaded her in vain, for who can turn back a desireful mind or a downward-coursing stream? With her father’s leave she began to practise a severe penance. She cast aside her silken garments and her shining gems. She put on a dress of bark but her beauty shone out therefore, for not only bees but even moss lends charm to a lotus flower. She who felt even flower-bed rough lay on the bare floor. The sages come to see her unparalleled austerities. In her hermitage animals which are natural enemies lived in

amity, and the tree yielded whatever was desired. Such was the power of her penance. Surrounded by four fires she gazed on the sun with an unwavering gaze. She lived only on cloud-given water and the lunar rays which fell on her person. As she gave up even the eating of leaves, she was called Aparna.

One day a young Brahmachari entered her hermitage. He said to her: "Is your penance progressing well? Your penance is peerless. I have a question to ask you? Born of the Creator's direct line, dowered with the sum of all beauty, blessed with matchless wealth and radiant youth what can you seek? If you seek a husband, forbear to perform penance, because a precious gem seeks not but is sought. Take half my penance to secure your aim." Uma then signalled to her companion to speak in reply. On hearing the object of her penance the youth said: "How can I praise your aim? How can your hand bear to clasp in wedding his serpent-decorated hand? How can you dwell in his lonely and fearful haunts? How can you to bear ride his old bull? His eyes are unusual, his birth is unknown; the air is his garment; has he got anything that is sought in

bridegrooms?" Uma then broke forth in angry words: "You do not know God Siva. Men of low minds hate the superior and ununderstood ways of great souls. He is the saviour of the world. Being a pauper he is the source of all wealth. Living in cremation-grounds he is the Lord of the universe. Dreadful in seeming he is known as Siva (the auspicious). Who knows him well? Before him on his old bull bows Indra riding on his divine elephant. Who can know the birth of Him who is the creator of even the Creator? Why should I dispute with you? My mind is fixed on him and true love heeds not other's opinions. I will not hear you. Not only he who traduces holy persons commits sin; he who hears such abuse is a sinner as well. I shall go away." As she turned, Siva—for such was the youth—in his own form held her. Smitten with sudden bashfulness she could neither stop nor go. God Siva said "From today I am thy slave bought by thy penance". When she heard those blessed words the pain of her penance slid away from her, for all effort loses its pain of striving when effort is crowned with success.

In this canto the verse has a majestic

cadence of its own. The poet is wrapt above his usual self in describing the pure victory of devotion as compared with the failure of loveliness. Rabindranath Tagore has said well in his essay on *Kalidasa: the Moralist*: "He shows Cupid vanquished and burnt to ashes, and in Cupid's place he makes triumphant a power that has no decoration, no helper—a power thin with austerities, darkened by sorrow". He points out how Kalidasa reserves the best resources of his art for the love "stripped of all the external robes of *beauty* and circled with the pure white halo of *goodness*". He says: "Physical charm is not the highest glory or supreme beauty in a woman.....Submission to *spiritual* beauty is no defeat, it is a voluntary offering of self..... The highest rank among our women is that of the matron. (Child-birth is a holy sacrament in our country.) He shows how a European poet would have ended *Sakuntala* with the agony of the king on recovering the lost ring and (*Kumarasambhava* with the grief and shame of Parvathi)" "at the failure of her assault on Siva's heart". Thus Kalidasa is not a poet of mere aesthetic pleasure. In him as in Valmiki and Vyasa, we find the inner *sanctum*

*sanctorum* of renunciation in the midst of the vast and glittering outer temple of sense-delights.

Uma then sent word to God Siva to request her father to give her in marriage. God Siva then thought of the Seven Sages. They started at once along with Arundhati for Kailasa. They bathed in the heavenly Ganga. They wore garments of golden bark and had rosaries of gems in their hands. The sun bowed with reverence to them on seeing their higher flight. They were the auxiliary creators of the universe. God Siva treated all of them with respect, because in the eyes of the great it is character and not sex that counts. On learning God Siva's desire they said "Our scriptural studies and sacrifices and our austerities have borne fruit today as the Lord of the universe has found a use for us. He is the most blessed of mortals in whose mind you reside. How much more blessed are we who dwell in your divine mind! Why should we express our thoughts to you who reside in the hearts of all?" God Siva told them that he desired Parvati as his bride for serving the purposes of the Gods and the welfare of the world. The

sages then went to King Himalaya. Here follows another fine description of the Himalayas in the sixth canto. The glory of the descending sages shone like the succession of imaged suns inside disturbed waters. King Himalaya received them with reverence and said to them: "Your unforeseen coming looks like a sudden shower without the appearance of clouds, and like a sudden fruitage without the fore-appearance of bloom. On seeing you I feel like a man in swoon re-attaining consciousness. I feel like iron transformed into gold. I feel like one raised from earth to Heaven. The touch of your feet has made this mountain holy so as to confer holiness on all. I have been made doubly sacred by the descent of the Ganges and by the touch of your feet. This inanimate mountaïn frame of mind has been purified by your touch; and this animate body has become sacred by its service unto you. You have illumined me without and within. My queen and my daughter and I and our all are yours". Then Angirasa, as the spokesman of the sages, said: "Your mind is as elevated as your peaks. You are God Vishnu's manifestation among mountains. Your fame and your rivers

purify the world. The moon-crested God Siva who is the Supreme God and who is the Supreme *Yogi* seeks thy daughter as his bride. She is the Mother of the universe just as He is its father". While the sages made this request, Parvati with coy and bended face counted the petals of the lotus flower sportively held in her hand. Though Himalaya was overjoyed he looked at his queen Mena, because in bridal matters men see only through the eyes of their wives. Mena being a perfect wife had no desires and ideas apart from those of her lord. Himalaya then said to the sages: "My daughter is our reverential offering to the soul of the Universe. Your sacred selves have made the request. I have now attained the consummation of my marital felicity. My daughter who is the chosen bride of the Three-eyed god bows to you". The sages blessed her. Arundhati took her on her lap and blessed her. The marriage was fixed for the fourth day. God Siva learnt from them the result of their mission and spent the three long days in impatient longing. If love could touch God, how can man be but helpless when impelled by love?

The seventh canto is another magnificent



piece of poetry. The bridal procession of Siva and the wedding of Siva are described with all the splendid resources of Kalidasian art. The capital of King Himalaya was made a mass of splendour. Flowers were strewn in the streets in abundance, Silken banners fluttered everywhere. Festoons decorated the entire city. The matrons dressed and decorated Parvati for the bridal hour. She shone with fuller glory like the lunar orb lit up in the night by the solar rays. Her beauty was so entrancing that the attiring ladies would not take their eyes from her when they dressed her in a robe of white silk. They dried her bathed tresses with fragrant smoke and decorated them with fragrant flowers. She then shone like a blossomed creeper or like the starlit sky. In the meantime the Seven Mothers—Brahmi and others—placed before God Siva garments and ornaments of glory. He merely touched these out of respect for them. But by His divine will he became in a moment a youth in bridal glory. His holy ashes became a sandal paste. The skull on his head became a shining crown. His elephant skin became shining silk. The serpents on his body became shining gems. What further head-ornament did he need who

had the pure stainless glory of the moon as his crest-jewel? The Sun-God held a white umbrella over his head. The Ganga and the Yamuna in their animate forms waved yak-tail fans. God Brahma and God Vishnu went before him shouting "Victory to Siva". It is only one Divine Being who has taken the three divine forms of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. In some *Leelas* one would be the central and supreme figure and in some another. The Gods bowed before Him. He showed courtesy to Brahma by a nod, to Vishnu by a word, to Indra by a smile, and to the other gods by a look. The divine musicians sang and there was the dance of the divine dancers. As the divine bridal party entered the capital, the ladies of the city saw with wonder the glory of the Lord. They felt as if they had no senses but the eyes. They said: "It is fitting that Uma performed much penance, because how else could such bliss be attained? If the Creator had not brought such beautiful persons together in love, his creation would be vain. If Kama had not been burnt, he would have committed suicide on seeing Siva's beauty transcend his own". Then followed the happy and holy marriage. Goddess Lakshmi held

above their heads a shining lotus flower. Goddess Sarasvati sang the praises of the bridegroom and the bride. Then at the request of the assembled gods, God Siva restored Kama to life.

The eighth canto describes the conjugal bliss of the divine pair. It has been said that only the first seven cantos are the work of Kalidasa and that the remainder of the poem is the work of some other poet. This is a baseless theory. The fact that in the later cantos the same height of poetic beauty is not attained is not an argument of much force at all. If Kalidasa did not write the other cantos, we would have to assume that he stopped the poem on the birth of the war god without referring to such birth and with the marriage of his parents! Further, the poem would not have the essential characteristics of a Mahakavya without these later cantos. The poetry in the last ten cantos is full of characteristic Kalidasaian touches. It is vigorous and beautiful though not so charming as the first seven cantos. Actual fighting can never be poetically described with success; and further, grand descriptions of battles have already been given

to the world in the two supreme epics of India. Besides, Kalidasa's gentle genius was not equal to the description of the rough sublimities of war. The bridal bliss of Uma and Siva is described with a reticence which charms and with a wealth of detail that is at times oppressively cloying with over sugared description. They lived in Himalaya's palace for a month and then went to Kailasa and then to the Gandhamadana forest. A hundred years thus fled like a single night. This canto contains a beautiful description of night to which I shall refer while discussing Kalidasa's poetry of Nature.

We now come to the ninth canto. One day a dove entered into the nuptial room. It was beautiful to behold. Its sounds were like those of a damsel during the bliss of love. Its red eyes were turning incessantly this side and that. It was moving its neck up and down in an attractive manner and wagging its lovely tail. Its wings knew no fetters. It walked with sportive pride. It was white in tint. It had tufted forefeet. It flew in lovely circles. God Siva knew it to be the disguised God Agni and became full of wrath. God Agni then

suppliated him and told him that he came on behalf of the gods so that God Siva may give them a generalissimo to bring victory to their arms. God Siva allowed him to bear his potent seed. Then he and Uma went, accompanied by the gods, to Mount Kailasa about which a splendid description occurs in this poem.

Indra advised Agni to leave the seed in the waters of the Ganga. Agni accordingly did so. Here occurs in the tenth canto one of the most splendid pieces of Nature-poetry in the description of the Ganges. But the fiery seed was unbearable even by the Ganga. Then the six Krittikas (Pleiades) came and bathed in the river. The seed entered into them. They then gave birth to God Kumara and left the baby in a clump of reeds (Saravana). The goddess Ganga suckled the child with joy. The Krittikas also protected him. They and Agni each claimed the child. At that time Siva and Uma came there. Uma asked Siva about the divine and beautiful child. Siva told her that the child was her child. She embraced and kissed the child. Then Siva and Uma took the child to Kailasa. The whole universe rejoiced at the birth of Kumara. But the glory of

Taraka trembled in fear. The eleventh canto describes also Kumara's Balaleela (sportive childhood).

The 12th canto describes the coming of Indra to request God Siva to give the boy as the commander of the armies of the gods for defeating the demon Taraka. In six days Kumara had become a blossomed youth. In this canto there occurs a wonderful description of Siva seated in Kailasa with Uma by his side. Then Indra requested him to give Kumara to them to lead them to victory. Gladly did Siva and Uma give the boy to the gods. Here we see the perfect art of the poet. In the *Ramayana* Dasaratha grieves to send the boy Rama to fight the demons. But such a description would be inappropriate in the case of God. Kalidasa with a perfect self-restraint refuses to follow the *Ramayana* incidents which would be unsuited to the level of his epic narrative.

The thirteenth canto describes the onward march of God Kumara after receiving the blessings of Siva and Parvati. On reaching Swarga (heaven) the gods were afraid to enter

it lest the demons be there, and each of them began to ask the other to enter first. Then Kumara gave them assurance of protection and they entered their old home. What a scene of desolation met their eyes! Kumara's anger blazed forth at that sight. The gods then anointed him as their generalissimo. The fourteenth canto describes the march of the armies of the gods in martial array with flags flying and trumpets blowing. The golden dust raised by the march reached up to the cloudland and the clouds shone with untimely evening tints and splendours. The fifteenth canto describes the demon armies. Taraka is warned by omens and portents, and aerial voices but he flings defiance at them and rushes to battle. The sixteenth canto describes the battle between the two armies. Taraka's fight and death are described in the last canto. He fights the chief gods with *astras* (magic weapons) and defeats them. Then he approaches God Kumara and tells him; "Oh child of the ascetic Sambhu! Give up your pride of arm. Do not help these gods. Why do you fatigue yourself by bearing the heavy load of arms on your soft and gentle and handsome boyish shoulders? You are the only child of your parents. Why do you thus

seek death at my hands? Run away to your parent's lap and live happy there. Escape before the stone ship of Indra's fortune flounders in the sea and vanishes altogether". God Kumara replied: "Your proud words are worthy of you. Let me see your prowess. Take up your weapons of war". They then fought with wonderful and terrible magic weapons till the world shook with terror of the battle. God Kumara overcame all the weapons of Taraka just as a perfect yogi conquers all the varied and powerful armies of worldly desire. Then Taraka rushed at him in anger to kill him with a sword. Finally God Kumara hurled at him his resistless and invincible *shakti* (lance) and slew him. At once there fell on the holy head of God Kumara a blessed shower of cool Ganges spray and a perfumed shower of rained flowers from heaven. The faces of the gods shone with recovered joy and re-attained glory. They praised God Kumara as the liberator and protector and saviour of heaven. Thus by the grace of God Kumara the sorrows of heaven were healed and the enemy of the gods was slain and Indra was restored to his proud sovereignty of heaven.



I wish to dwell awhile here on Mr. A. B. Keith's condemnation of cantos IX to XVII of the poem. While some other critics reject canto VIII also, he is tender to it and would ascribe it to Kalidasa. He says in his *Classical Sanskrit Literature*:—"There can be no doubt whatever of the late origin of cantos IX to XVII. They must have been by one who thought that the eight cantos did not fulfil the purpose of the work, since they end with the description of the joys of Siva and Parvati in wedlock. He insists therefore, on bringing Kumara into the world, and in describing in full his victory over the demon Taraka, whose description affords the motive for his birth, thus exceeding the promise of the title much more than the actual poem falls short of it. Fortunately, the defects of taste of the new cantos are the only evidence of their later date. While Kalidasa after the *Ritusamhara* carefully avoids the repetition of the same phrases, his follower shamelessly brings forward again and again a phrase, which has caught his fancy, much as does Bhasa in his drama. He delights in the use of prepositional compounds, contrary to the manner of Kalidasa, but in keeping with

the later taste, as also is his use of the perfect-middle with subject in the instrumental. Kalidasa shows in a high degree the power to use his complicated metres without filling them with meaningless or feeble words, but this poet light-heartedly sips in words like *sadyas* or *alam*, delights in prefixing *su* to every available phrase, and shows his ingenuity in coining long synonyms for his characters. The metrical evidence is equally decisive; the caesura at the close of the first and third verses of the sloka is always observed by Kalidasa; in these cantos it is omitted five times, and the same laxity occurs six times with Upajati stanzas; in the latter, even when the caesura is respected it is often weak that is at the end of a portion of a compound, a licence almost unknown to Kalidasa. Further, the writers on poetics and the commentators leave these cantos aside. Their spuriousness is thus incontestable; from the frequent use of *anta* in the end of compounds, which he compares with the Marathi locative suffix *ant*. Jacobi has conjectured that the author was a Marathi writer. The case is entirely different with canto VIII, which is often passed over in the manuscripts, avowedly sometimes because of

its erotic character. It is known to the writers on poetics, and is full of the spirit and style of Kalidasa. It does not, we must admit, bring the poem to an effective termination, and no explanation of this defect is obvious. Do all our copies go back to a manuscript on birch-bark whose last leaf as often was hopelessly injured? Was the poet deterred from writing more by the criticisms of his first audience, to whom, as to Mammata and Visvanatha, the depicting of the erotic play of the supreme deity was distasteful? The question cannot be answered; that Kalidasa was cut off by death before completing it is improbable, for the *Raghuvamsa* has every sign of later date". I have quoted this long passage partly because of Mr. Keith's eminence and deserved fame as a scholar and a critic and partly as a sample of a thoroughly erroneous type of criticism. Mr. Ryder says with equal error that the *Raghuvamsa* was one of the poet's earlier works and that he then turned to other works and never cared "to take up the rather thankless task of ending a youthful work". If the poem *Kumarasambhava* stopped with the eighth canto the poem should have been called *Parvati-Parinayam* and not *Kumarasambhavam* at all.

The criticism that the poem, by describing Kumara's Victory over the demons, goes beyond the purpose of the poem is palpably incorrect. The title *Kumara-Sambhavam* does not imply that the poem should stop with the birth of the babe. The poem certainly implies and aims at describing the glory of the God. The remark that the offending cantos are spurious because the author of the cantos brings up again and again a favourite phrase has no truth or value in it. Kalidasa, like other poets, has such peculiarities, and there is nothing unusual or condemnable about it. Homer has several such adjectival and other phrases (e. g. silver-footed Thetis etc.) and repeats them frequently in his immortal epic. The grammatical and metrical remarks and observations stated by Mr. Keith in support of his theory are equally fanciful and baseless. The word *sadyas* is found also in the admittedly genuine cantos of the poem (e. g. III. 26, 27, 29). The stanzas in cantos IX to XVII are as vigorous and beautiful and as correct in respect of accent and quantity and caesura as any other stanzas in the poem or in the other unimpeachable poems of Kalidasa. In fact the wonderful description of the Ganges in canto X, the equally remarkable description

of the dove in canto XIII, the supremely sublime description of God Siva in canto XII when Indra goes to meet Him, and other descriptions in the poem show the master-hand of Kalidasa in an even greater measure than the remarkable descriptions of the Himalaya, of Siva's penance, of Rati's lament, of Parvati's penance, of the dialogue between Siva and Parvati, of the seven sages, and of the marriage of Siva and Parvati in cantos I to VII of the *Kumarasambhava*. The fact that the writers on poetics and the commentators have left the later cantos aside is of minimal importance. The writers on poetics do not quote from every canto of every great poem. They quote such stanzas as are fine illustrations of *alankara* and *rasa* and *dhvani*. The fact that the commentators have not commented on particular cantos cannot show the spuriousness of these portions. On this basis *Ritusamhara* will have to be rejected as a spurious work. Jacob's guess that the author of the cantos in question was probably a Marathi writer is too fantastic and absurd to need or deserve any serious consideration. The reasons urged by Mr. Keith to disprove the heresy about the spuriousness of canto VIII will disprove his own heresy

about the spuriousness of cantos IX to XVII. His suggestion that Kalidasa probably read out his work to an audience which strongly disapproved of the description of the loves of Siva and Parvati and that thereupon he probably desisted from continuing his poem is thoroughly fantastic and unacceptable. Why should their imagined disapproval have such a result? He might have well omitted the offending canto and proceeded with the poem and completed it. Mr. Keith is certainly right in demolishing the heresy that *Raghucamsa* was an earlier work of the poet. To use his own words, cantos IX to XVII of Kumarasambhava are "full of the spirit and style of Kalidasa."

Mr. Ryder says with justice that the entire work is certainly that of Kalidasa. He refers to the vague tradition that the poem had twenty-three cantos. This is an absolutely unfounded tradition. He says: "It has been somewhat more formidably argued that the concluding cantos are spurious, and that Kalidasa wrote only the first seven or perhaps the first eight cantos. Yet after all, what do these arguments amount to? Hardly more than this, that the first eight cantos are better

poetry than the last nine. As if a poet were always at his best, even when writing on a kind of subject not calculated to call out his best. Fighting is not Kalidasa's *forte*; love is. Even so, there is great vigour in the journey of Taraka, the battle and the duel. It may not be the highest kind of poetry, but it is wonderfully vigorous poetry of its kind." Thus Mr. Ryder's arguments completely demolish the arguments of Mr. Keith.

I think that, however, a more than passing mention is needed in regard to Kalidasa's over-luscious description of the nuptial bliss of Siva and Parvati. I personally think that he has made it too sugared and too human. But he brings in the higher note also and saves the description from the charge of grossness and indecency. Siva is described as telling Parvati that *Sandhya* (evening) is a holy time and is not an hour for dalliance. We are reminded again that the hymeneal bliss of the divine pair was only for the salvation of the world. In the last stanza in Canto VI, the poet glorifies love and asks that if pure love can rule the hearts of even gods, how much more should it fill us with delight. We find descriptions of dalliance in

Magha also. They are found in Homer's great epic as well. The great aesthetic critic Anandavardhana says that though the delineation of the love of gods is not a fit subject for poetic treatment a great poet could sublimate it and lift it to the level of an adequate poetic theme. Kalidasa's description in *Raghuvamsa* about Agnivarṇa's amorous dalliances is not regarded as showing that he is not the author of canto XIX of *Raghuvamsa* or as a breach of poetic propriety. It seems to me that canto VIII of the *Kumarasambhava* is not a supreme piece of poetry but it is noble enough in execution and is certainly Kalidasa's work.

A comparison has been often made between *Kumarasambhava* and *Raghuvamsa* very often to the depreciation of the former in comparison with the latter poem. But in the former there is more unity than variety while in the latter there is more variety than unity. In the former we have more scope than in the latter for magnificent descriptions of Nature's glories — forests and mountains and streams and day and night and their ever-same yet ever-new splendours. In the latter we have more human interest than in the former. In the



*Kumarasambhava* we have a less crowded canvas but on the other hand the few figures that are painted there are touched up with infinite care and art.

Mr. A. W. Ryder says: "Further, it must be admitted that the interest runs a little thin. Even in India, where the world of gods runs insensibly into the world of men, human beings take more interest in the adventures of men than of Gods. The Gods, indeed, can hardly have adventures; they must be victorious. *The Birth of the War-God* pays for its greater unity by a poverty of adventure". This is acute criticism but it errs by exaggeration and insufficient vision. The interest in the poem is not thin at all. Of course all description of battle must have a sameness and a uniformity. The varieties of cut and thrust and parry must have an uninteresting uniformity despite magical weapons. Further, Kalidasa was by the bent of his genius a poet of love and a poet of nature than a poet of war. But Kalidasa has shown how even such a subject could be handled with poetic power. In the last canto he has made the use of *astras* (magical weapons) an occasion for magnificent descriptions of

universal nights and tempests and deluges and conflagrations. The martial marches and the clash of armies also are rendered with power. Within the artistically limited scope of a martial campaign, he has given us a more artistic presentation than Homer or Virgil or Milton or even Vyasa or Valmiki. It is difficult also to follow Mr. Ryder's veiled remark about "the world of gods" and "the world of men" in India. Yoga is the meeting point of the two worlds, and the nearness of gods and men — not only in poetic faith but in the living faith of the day — is an advantage both to the poets and to the people. The poverty of adventure in the poem is to the limitations of the story and is compensated for by the splendid nature-poetry, the painting of the chief figures in the story, and the general high altitude of feeling pervading the entire work.

Mr. Ryder thinks that *Raghuvamsa* was perhaps the earlier work and was written by a poet who yet had his spurs to win. But this inference from the poet's expressed modesty in *Raghuvamsa* is one resting upon a slender foundation. Kalidasa's modesty of nature was with him all through life and appears even

in such a mature product of his genius as *Sakuntala*. It seems to me that the *Birth of the War-God* is probably his earliest work next to the *Ritusamhara*. It is full of a youthful exuberance of imagination. Love of nature is yet his ruling passion. His interest in the realm of emotion was always as deep as his interest in the beauty of nature all through his life. But that reticent ripeness of feeling and utterance which is his most magical poetic gift is seen more in *Raghuvamsa* than in this poem and is seen at its best in *Sakuntala*. As in the case of Shakespeare, so in the case of Kalidasa, we find a prodigal largesse of poetic thought and expression giving place to poignancy of poetic feeling and condensation of expression consummated at the end by a divine passion of peace in which love of man and of nature and of God is seen in harmonised beauty of perfection and perfection of beauty.

More than anything else the *Kumarsambhava* is valuable to us for all time as it gives us perfect pictures of God Siva, Goddess Parvati, and God Kumara. Indian imagination has clung round these divine figures which are our archetypes of ascetic power, grace, and

heroism. (We have a full description of Uma as maiden and as bride and as mother, and Kalidasa's portraiture of Uma is one that will fire men's hearts for ever.) By her side Eve's delineation looks jejune, and the pictures of Helen and Andromache and Dido seem to be symphonies pitched in a much lower key. Sita and Draupadi have more human interest for us because of their sufferings and fortitude and tried and proved purity. But for elemental loveliness and lovefullness, for supreme grace and graciousness, for the supreme fascination of the eternal feminine, Kalidasa's portraiture of Uma stands supreme in universal literature. We may well say of Kalidasa's delineation of Uma what he says of Uma herself :

स्वरेण तस्याममृतसुतेव

प्रजल्पितायामभिजातवाचि ।

अप्यन्यपुष्टा प्रतिकूलशब्दा

श्रोतुर्वितन्त्रीरिव ताड्यमाना ॥





## CHAPTER X.

### Meghasandesa.

**M**R. C. A. Kincaid has well called this work as “the most wonderful love-poem in any language”. It has fascinated men’s minds for countless centuries by its originality of conception and its charm of sentiment and style. Kalidasa obviously took the root idea of a messenger from the *Ramayana*. Verse 39 in the second part of the poem says : पवनतनये मैथिलोन्मुखी सः (as Sita saw Hanuman).

Mallinatha says in his commentary on verse 1 of the poem :

सीतां प्रति रामस्य हनूमत्संदेशं मनसि निधाय मेघसंदेशं  
कविः कृतवानित्याहुः ।

To Valmiki he was indebted in many ways and made no secret of his debts. He probably derived his inspiration for the first part of the

poem from the journey of the aerial car from Lanka to Ayodhya. But Kalidasa has used the borrowed ideas in such an original way and given it such a new and jewelled frame that it has become an original idea in his hands. Mr. A. W. Ryder says well: "In fact, Kalidasa created in the *Cloud-Messenger* a new genre. The poem has been a source of inspiration to many later poets. Though these have written similar *Sandesa Kavyas*, Kalidasa's poem is far and away the greatest of such poems".

Professor Wilson says about it: "The style of the work is also simple, while at the same time it is exquisitely polished." Mr. A. A. Macdonnell says: "It is full of deep feeling, and abounds with fine descriptions of the beauties of Nature." He says again: "Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* or 'the Cloud Messenger' is a lyrical gem which won the admiration of Goethe... The idea is applied by Schiller in his *Maria Stuart* where the captive Queen of Scots calls on the clouds, as they fly southward, to greet the land of her youth." It is needless to cull other appreciations from the West. In India the poem has been a universal favourite. There have been nearly fifty com-

mentaries written on it. Mr. Nandargikar refers in his edition of the poem to twenty commentaries. Mr. M. M. Chakravarthi refers in an article on the poem to forty commentaries. Professor M. Rangacharya has in his critical appreciation of the poem described it as "one of the most perfect products of the poetic art known to human culture and civilisation."

(In every lyric poem there should be dynamic feeling expressed in simple and direct and impassioned language.) Only then will such vibrant feeling have an aliveness which would thrill and captivate the hearts of others. Though lyrics of war and Godward devotion come within the class of lyric poetry, yet the lyric poem *par excellence* is the lyric of love. The truest realisation of life is in joy, and the joy of youthful love and loveful youth is the earliest and the most persistent of the higher joys of life.) Byron says well:

"Devotion wafts the mind above;  
But heaven itself descends in love."

The test of all great literature is whether it pleases and charms and enraptures and elevates us by the very purity and power of its

charm and loveliness. Does it lead to self-forgetfulness—the merger of our lower self so full of work and vexation and vanity in a higher self full of wonder and virtue and wisdom? The poet of love, if he is tuned to the highest moods of love, is a rare and radiant and fortunate being, because he feels and kindles and communicates a higher joy than the earth owns in its ordinary and humdrum moods. That is why a great poet of love has an eternity of fame. Valmiki, Kalidasa, Sappho, Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Burns, and Shelley will abide for ever while other reputations are engulfed in the Lethean flood. As Watson sings:

“Princes and captains leave a little dust,  
And Kings a dubious legend of their reign,  
The swords of Caesars they are less than rust,  
The poet doth remain ”

Mr. A. B. Keith has combined his praise of the poem with subtle hints of faults and demerits but his criticism is defective and inaccurate because he has missed the scope of the poem. He says in his *Classical Sanskrit Literature* that the poem is the nearest approximation in tone to the Greek elegy in Sanskrit literature, and that it is however deficient in



reality as it deals with divine beings. He says further; "Their severance is but temporary, their reunion certain, and the grief of the hero seems thus to modern feeling less than manly, for to us, as to the greatest of Greek historians, courage to endure what is sent by heaven appears the duty of man. Schiller, who in his *Maria Stuart* makes the captive queen bid the clouds as they fly south greet the land of her happy youth, uses the *motif* in more effective guise; the hapless queen is well aware that for her there is no more chance of seeing again the fair land of France, and her position evokes true pathos". This is unfair and ungenerous and inaccurate criticism. What Kalidasa aimed at should not be wrongly assumed to be an elegy, and it is not fair to proceed to draw inferences and comparisons on the basis of such an assumption. If we want a true elegy by Kalidasa, we must go to the Indumati episode in *Raghuvamsa*. There we find the desolation of life, the overflow of tenderness, the attempt to endure in a heroic spirit, and the breakdown of the soul which form the essential elements of a noble elegy. Kalidasa's aim in *Meghasandesha* is to combine a descriptive lyric and a love lyric and fuse them into one by the fire of his

Imagination, and in this task he has achieved supreme success. I shall show presently how the choice of semi-divine beings as the hero and the heroine of the poem was a stroke of the highest and the happiest art. There is plenty of real pathos in the poem but it is subordinate to the descriptions of nature and of love. Mr. Keith is more just and accurate when he proceeds to say: "The poem is a master-piece of the description of the deepest, yet most tender affection, in which passion is purified and ennobled. The power of description of nature foreshadowed in the *Ritusamhara* is here seen heightened and more brilliant, as a result of the human emotion which pervades the poem. It is significant of the development of Kalidasas' skill that the metre chosen for the work is throughout the Mandakranta, with its four padas each of seventeen syllables, making up the stanza, with caesuras at the fourth and tenth syllables. A much ampler means of expression of a single thought is thus available than within the restricted limits of the Indravajra and Vamsastha, which make up more than half of the *Ritusamhara*, but at the same time a severe strain is imposed on the capacity of the poet, but one to which he shows himself equal."

Mr. A. B. Keith says that the Jain Jinasena in the eighth century A. D., "adopting the principle of *samasyapoorana*, the building up of a stanza on the basis of a given verse, has managed to work the text of the Meghaduta, as he knew it in 120 verses, into his account of the Jain saint Parsvanatha (i. e. Parsvabhyudaya). He then proceeds to say: "Vallabhadeva in the twelfth, Mallinatha in the fourteenth century, give the poem as having 111 and 118 verses respectively, a sign of the possibility of interpolation even in so famous a poem, which is attested also by the various recensions of the dramas". While interpolation is by no means improbable, it is not right to draw any inference like that drawn by Mr. Keith from Jinasena's work. The text of the poem was not seriously meddled with and we have got a very largely accurate text of the poem as the result of the careful study and editing by Indian scholars.

Kalidas's lyric poem is in its first part a descriptive lyric and in its second part a lyric of longing love. (His artistic plan has enabled him to combine in his work the glories of nature and the glories of love.) He is an

expert in linking up nature and human feeling as shown above in my chapter on *Ritusamhara*. The powers seen there in youthful and somewhat undisciplined exuberance are found here in perfection of maturity and self-control. The result is a poem of transcendental beauty and charm in artistic *motif*, in æsthetic conception, and in emotional presentation.

The story of the poem is very simple and attractive. A yaksha (*yakshas* are demigods) who is employed under Kubera,—the God of Wealth and the lord of Alaka—is banished for a year by Kubera on account of some fault and is sent away from the divine regions in the Himalayas where Alaka is situated, to the ordinary life on earth in the plains of Central India. During his exile the yaksha takes his abode in the hermitage on the Ramagiri Mountain in Central India. The poem describes the mountain as having been sacred by the touch of Sri Rama's feet 'वन्यैः पुंसां रघुपतिपदैरङ्कितं मेखलासु' and as containing the waters made holy by the bath of Sita therein. There is a significance in this subtle and artistic reference in the very first stanza in the poem. It shows that the abode was a holy one; it suggests also by

reference to the Ramayana story that the burden of the poem is the pang of love in separation; it suggests also that as the yaksha took his abode in a spot where Rama and Sita (the use of both the words is a further significant fact) lived in wedded and united happiness, such a bliss would come to the yaksha also ; it suggests further that though in the home of wealth (Alaka) the yaksha forgot his duty and had a heavy punishment, he would attain a higher plane of being in the *Asrama* (which is a home of austerity) on the holy hill and would very soon be free from his troubles. By the words कन्याधिरहगुरुणा and अहङ्गमितमहिमा the poet prepares our mind for the moods of the disconsolate lover who is feeling the punishment intensely because it involves separation from his beloved and to whom the banishment is at once a source of repentance and purification and of obscuration of the plenitude of his former power and pleasures. The curse had obscured his power; and love and grief had almost changed him into another person altogether. It is by such subtle strokes of art that the poet prepares our minds to accept the story that the yaksha even went so far as to beseech a cloud to be his messenger to his beloved. In the second

verse he tells us that the exile had continued for some months and that the yaksha was pale and thin and disconsolate. By using the word कामी the poet suggests that the hero had an element of self-deception common to all lovers. He says in *Sakuntala* कामी स्वतां पश्यति. He suggests also that the yaksha was a child of pleasure and a being born for a life of love and was shrivelled up by the first touch of the fire of sorrow which he felt when he saw the amorous and playful cloud embracing the hill. In the third verse he tells us that even ordinary men who are as much accustomed to the pains as to the pleasures of life feel a new passion of love if living with their beloved and an intense grief if separated from their beloved. In the fourth verse the poet suggests by the word 'दयिता जीवितालंबनार्थी' that the yaksha's love have taken a purer range. He was no longer a mere कामी thinking of his own love and his own sorrow. He yearned for his beloved wife's consolation and hence wished to send a message to her about himself as he was her life. (This element of तत्सुखसुखित्वं (joy in the joy of the beloved) is the real soul of human love as well as divine love.

Thus the first four stanzas attune our minds to that pure and refined emotional mood

whereby alone we can really enter the poet's heart and enjoy the poem. By making the hero of the poem a demigod and isolating the passion of love, Kalidasa was enabled to achieve that idealisation and concentration which would intensify the æsthetic appeal of the poem. The *yakshas* are called in the poem as *Yakshesvaras* and *Vittesas* (lords of wealth). They have many pleasures in life and have a keen enjoyment of such pleasures. Their women are fair; they have all the resources of art besides immense affluence; they live in stately mansions built of rich metals and precious stones; their gardens have unfading and ever-fragrant flowers; their nights are fair with ever-present lunar light; they shed no tears but tears of joy; they have no fever but the fever of amatory passion they have no separations except through friendly quarrels; and they have no seasons of life except the season of youth (see verses 1 to 4 of Part II). They indulge in honeyed and vinous drinks; the breezes blow there gently and with odorous coolness; they have luminous gems as tapers; they lounge on crystal floors and enjoy sweet and heavenly harmonies; Cupid who is afraid of God Siva has no need of his bow and arrows to fascinate the hearts of men because the

sweet glances of the ladies of Alaka have more power; and the *Kalpaka* tree gives them bright garments and flashing jewels and fadeless flowers; (verses 5 to 13 of Part II). At the same time they are not more epicures. They are persons of true refinement and delicacy and chivalry of nature. In verse 4 of Part I the hero welcomes the cloud with chivalrous courtsey. He is attentive to its wants and enjoyments throughout the poem though he is full of himself and his sorrows. He tells the cloud that the lady is his friend and also his brother's wife (भ्रातृजाया), thus calling the cloud as his brother in the message to her that the cloud is his dear friend. As the poet has given such a setting, the sensuous sweetness of the poem, and the glorification of the emotion of love and the gorgeous descriptions of Nature in it gain a perfect fitness and appropriateness. Such an exaltation of sense-delights is successfully and appropriately achieved also in *Vikramorvasiya* where also the heroine belongs to the celestials.

Thus the choice of the hero and the isolation of the love-emotion were two master-strokes of art. In epic or dramatic poetry there must be a crowded canvas and all the passions.



of life should be shown in all their intensity of inter-play. But in a lyric poem the isolation and idealisation of the emotion of love give us a different and wonderful artistic effect. Kalidasa's poem was thus happily imagined so as to give adequate scope for the expression of the lyrical genius of one of the greatest lyric-poets of the world.

Kalidasa's greatness is further apparent in the subtle strokes by which he introduces a higher element into this poetic conception of love. Not only has he by a reference to Janaka-Tanaya (Sita) and Rama uplifted the love-emotion of the poem into a higher plane. By bringing the love from his mansion into an Asrama he has linked up pleasure and peace. Further, he says in verse 7 of Part I that Alaka is lit up by the rays from the moon shining from the head of God Siva who lives in the gardens in the outskirts of Alaka. Thus even in these children of pleasure there is an awed sense of divinity close by. In the same way we are told in *Vikramorvasiya* that the jewel which was to effect reunion sprang from Gauri's foot. All this prepares us for the poet's delineation of love in longing. The Sanskrit aestheticians say

that love in separation (विप्रलम्भशृङ्गार) reaches a higher height than love in union (संभोगशृङ्गार). I have dealt with this matter fully in my work on Indian Æsthetics. In *Sambhoga Sringara* there are elements of selfishness and grossness, however much we may refine it. But in *Vipralamba Sringara* love is spiritualised. In *Sakuntala* we have both. The most perfect illustration of this truth is in the Gopi episode in the Bhagavata. The Eternal Lord disappeared from their midst after fascinating them and purifying them in the very process of such fascination. He then reappeared and accepted the love-offering of their adoring and purified hearts. He told them to go back to their homes because by meditation and song and prayer they could realise His sweetness and love far more intensely than by mere physical proximity.

श्रवणादर्शनाद्वयानान्मयि भावोऽनुकीर्तनात् ।

न तथा सन्निकर्षेण प्रतियात ततो गृहान् ॥ X. 29. 7.

Only then will love be exalted to the level of religion and religion come down to the level of love. All the highest elements of self-effacement and unselfish love of others are

enkindled by love in longing during enforced separation. (The poet thus lifts *Sringara Rasa* to the level of *Bhakti Rasa* and at the same time preserves its human sweetness and charm.

I do not think that we need pause to discuss whether the yaksha would believe that an inanimate thing like a cloud could carry a message of love. Such conundrums will appear ludicrous if we put ourselves into the right emotional mood which is needed to enjoy the poem. If a swan could carry Damayanti's message to Nala and Nala's message to Damayanti, why should there be any inappropriateness in there being a cloud-messenger? In poetry personification is a means of producing great artistic effects. "The lover, the lunatic and the poet are of imagination all compact." Poets put their heart and their tongue into nature and make it feel their thoughts and speak their words. A scientist has to put himself and his moods out of the life of nature but a poet is under no such necessity or obligation. Further, the poet himself has tried to disarm such philistine scepticism by saying that those who suffer from the malady of love cannot make a sharp differentiation between

the animate and the inanimate (Verse 5 of Part I.) Call it a lover's reverie or a poetic personification as you like; there is no violation of artistic truth in the idea of the poem. The lover asks the cloud to go on a mission of beneficence and pilgrimage, because it can save his life and also go to the holy home of Siva and Gowri (See Part I Verse 8). It is asked to go slowly, to drink water on the way, to shower rain and extinguish the devastating forest fire and to be beneficent to all and not to the lover alone. This enables the poet to begin and complete his magnificent description of the natural beauties of Northern India. The metre adopted (*Mundakranta*) has that slow and royal dignity of movement which befits the ideas in the poem. The poet takes us to Vidisa, Ujjain, the river Nirvindhya, Avanti, the river Sipra, the shrine of Mahakala, the river Gambhira, the river Saraswati, the Ganges, Kailasa, the Manasa lake and finally to Alaka itself. The lover naturally dwells lingeringly over the route leading to his beloved, and the poet thus creates an opportunity to describe nature as the outer court of the soul. It is only a meretricious and vitiated taste that can find in this scheme any poetic unfitness at all.

I have already referred above to the splendours of the dream city of Alaka, the gorgeous descriptions of which in the poem show the poet's graphic power of delineation and gifts of picturesque expression in a remarkable pleasure. The city of Alaka, like Avalon, is built to the music of Kalidasa's verse and therefore not built at all and therefore built for ever. The gorgeous description of Alaka and of the hero's mansion there is meant to be enjoyed by itself and also in contrast with the ascetic self-denial of the yaksha's bride, just as the magnificent description of the Himalayas in the *Kumarasambhava* sets off the penance of Siva and the penance of Parvati. Further, such a gorgeous description would have an air of naturalness in the case of lords of wealth and pleasure like the yakshas, though it would savour of exaggeration in the case of cities of the earth.

I shall not linger here over the description of the yaksha's bride, her beauty, her grief, her longing, her pious austerities for securing her lord's welfare, and her pining expectation of his return, as I shall refer to these aspects in my later chapter on Kalidasa as the Poet of

Love. She is of few words. She is his second life. She pines for him and looks a lotus bitten by frost. Here again the poet is full of Valmiki's description of Sita in the Asoka forest (पद्मिनोव हिमात्यये.) She has pale lips and tearful eyes. Her face is resting on her hand. Her tresses are dishevelled. Her face looks like the moon seen through a cloud. She is worshipping the gods and praying to them to show grace to her lord. She tries to paint his beloved form. She asks the pet bird in the cage if it thought of the master of the house. She tries to sing songs descriptive of him but her tears fall fast and she forgets the time and the words again and again. She is counting the days of exile by means of flowers. She is lost in a reverie of amorous thought. Her sorrow deprives her of her sleep and she tosses in her bed in grief and longing. She prays for at least momentary sleep so that she may behold her lord in dream. She is waiting for him to come and bind up her tresses. She has discarded all her ornaments. She has but one thought—and that is about the idol of her heart.

The message sent through the cloud to her is equally beautiful. In the very opening

portion of the message (भर्तुर्मित्रं प्रियमविधवे) we see the poet's wonderful art. Just as in the *Ramayana* Valmiki makes Hanuman say to Rama दृष्टा देवी— thus emphasising the word 'seen' because if he used the word *Devi* first the too-eager listener might be in a mood of trepidation,— even so the poet makes भर्तुः the first word and even adds the word अविधवे. The message itself is full of the spirit of उत्कण्ठा (longing and abounds in the finest sentiments couched in the finest language. The yaksha sends her his love and embraces her with his thoughts. He says that he seeks in vain to find even faint and secondary resemblances of her loveliness in the sweetest and brightest aspects of nature. So much does she transcend all other loveliness in the universe. He welcomes even the breeze which comes after touching her beloved form. He yearns to compress the period of his exile into a moment so as to fly to her arms. He calls her *Kalyani*, meaning thereby that he lives because of her auspicious goodness of soul which pleads with God for his welfare. He says that, when God Vishnu rises from his serpent-bed, he would be with her in four months. In Part II verse 50 the lover includes in the message a secret love-incident known only to him and his

beloved. This recalls the *Manas Sila Tilaka* incident referred to by Rama in his message to Sita. Love does not die of separation but becomes the very essence of love because non-attainment kindles ardour and purifies and perfects love. Shakespeare says :

“ Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove ;  
O no ; it is an ever fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken”.

The lover then asks the cloud to come back and save his life by bearing her reply message and conveying it to him. I see nothing artistically inappropriate in this at all. He then blesses the cloud for its pitifulness and its affection and says : “ Float through any regions as you like ; let thy glory be augmented by the gifts of the rainy season ; and may you never be separated from thy spouse the lightning even for a moment.”

Thus in this lyric of a lover's heart-ache we find the highest poetry of Nature and of Love. It has a wonderful unity of conception and an equally wonderful unity of execution. It excels



as much in the details as in the total effect. The parts are not sacrificed to the whole nor the whole to the parts. The style is simple and sweet and musical. It is called *Vaidarbhi Riti* in Indian Aesthetics. Even more than the style is the ascent of thought in the poem. It shows how love in its highest aspects is a mood of self-forgetful and unselfish love of the beloved and of beneficence to the world and of pious dependence on God. To it Nature and Love are full of a new meaning and are related in a new way to God. To it comes a new intensification (Premarasi) and a new transcendence (Upachita Rasa) and it becomes the very soul of love.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### Raghuvamsa.

**T**HIS epic poem has been the delight of the young and the old in India. It is the earliest book of Sanskrit study in the case of boys. We of the older generation remember with keen delight our Sanskrit studies beginning with the words of the first stanza of the fourth canto स राज्ञं गुरुणा दत्तम्. Truly was this study a gift of sovereignty to us by our fathers — a sovereignty of a whole universe of feeling and thought.

Kalidasa chose a great theme as the subject of his epic poem and showed the greatest artistic genius in the ways in which he elaborated and condensed the materials available to him. The tale of Ayodhya divine had been rendered by one of the world-poets who was also one of the greatest sages and saints of the world. To write a poem or a play on such a theme was to court certain failure.

Besides, such an attempt to paint the lily would be a wasteful and ridiculous excess. Yet many poets and dramatists, who had not the keen sense of fitness which Kalidasa had, had assayed such a task in verse and in drama and committed the wasteful and ridiculous excess referred to above and also conspicuously failed in their attempts. Kalidasa's attempt to present the exploits of the solar line, expanding the achievements of Sri Rama's predecessors and condensing the life of Sri Rama, enabled him to handle one of the greatest epic themes of the world and at the same time avoid a comparison with the poet-saint whose work had thrilled countless generations and was sure to be an inspiring force for ever. Mr. Ryder says that the Hindus are "connoisseurs of story-telling" and that "the Hindus may fairly claim to be the best story-tellers of the world". Kalidasa is one of the best of the Indian story-tellers, and *Raghuvamsa* is the greatest and the best of his stories.

What a glorious line of kings is described by the poet! Let me quote his own words:

सोऽमाजन्मशुद्धानामाफलोदयकर्मणाम् ।

आसमुद्रक्षितीशानामानाकरथवर्त्तनाम् ॥

यथाविधि हुताग्नीनां यथाकामार्चितार्थिनाम् ।

यथापराधदण्डानां यथाकालप्रबोधिनाम् ॥

त्यागाय संभृतार्थानां सत्याय मितभाषिणाम् ।

यशसे विजिगीषूणां प्रजायै गृहमेधिनाम् ॥

शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम् ।

वार्धके मुनिवृत्तीनां योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम् ॥

रघूणामन्वयं वक्ष्ये ॥

( 1, 5 to 9 )

I am not able to accept Mr. Ryder's view that Kalidasa really desired to write "the wonderful story of Rama" but that, fearing comparison with Valmiki's immortal work, wrote a work which is "an epic poem in which Rama is the central figure, giving it such unity as it possesses, but which provides Rama with a most generous background in the shape of selected episodes concerning his ancestors and his descendants." This is not the express object of the poet. He affirms that he is going to write about the kings of Raghu's line ( रघूणामन्वयं वक्ष्ये ). Why should we then imagine his unexpressed thoughts and build a fabric of artistic theory thereupon? I do not think that the poet condensed the story of Rama merely out of

fear of comparison with Valmiki and added the lives of other Kings to swell out his poem to the regular epic length. In composing his poem on God Kumara he did not condense his work because of antecedent long Puranic works on the same theme. Quite naturally he did not try to do again what had been done by Valmiki in a way which no later poet could equal or excel. It seems to me that he rightly felt with the true and unerring artistic instinct which was always his own that the lives of the great kings of the solar race formed a noble and heroic epic theme and that a poem on the subject could be given to his race as a record and as a prophecy, as a treasury of racial ideals, and as the fore-warning index-finger of the genius of the race warning the people for all time against errors and excesses which would bring them low in the scale of nations and make them bite the dust. Mr. Ryder says that "it is not properly an epic of Raghu's line, for many kings of this line are unmentioned." This again is an erroneous view due to a defective poetic temperament without which the poet's heart cannot be known. To use the language of Indian aestheticians only a *Sahridaya* (man of poetic taste) can know the

*Kavīhridaya* (the heart of the poet). Kalidasa is not a chronicler in verse. He was not writing a kind of *Polyolbion*. He knew that if he tried to write a verse history of all the kings of the solar race he would be giving to the world a long rambling verse chronicle which might be interesting and even poetic but which would not be a great epic poem. A poem on Harischandra would by itself swell into epic dimension and would further have epic dignity and sublimity enough to dwarf the lives of all the other kings except the life of Sri Rama. Kalidasa wanted to give his poem true epic unity; he did not wish to treat the life of Sri Rama at great length; and he wished to write an epic about the great epic theme of the lives of the great kings. He achieved this by selecting a few kings before and after Sri Rama and by describing a few incidents in their lives. He was thus enabled to present a unified epic poem which would have Sri Rama as the central figure, which would at the same time describe other great kings of the solar line, which would enable him to amplify his canvas and present the interlinking of urban and forest life and the self-expansion of the Hindu race, and which would not only give to the people a mirror to

behold itself and treasury of the racial ideals but would stand as a clear warning to the race for ever.

It is now clear that Mr. Ryder's critical remark that "the result is a formless plot" is ungenerous and untrue. We must always pause and examine ourselves before we fling remarks carelessly about the poetic intentions and achievements of the truly immortal world-poets of all time. Of course to err is human. But let us apply that rule to ourselves first. Kalidasa has not given us a rambling plot. He has given us a deliberately well-woven plot and not merely beautiful style and fine presentation of character woven as an embroidery around a defective plot. The kings chosen and the incidents chosen in their lives show Kalidasa's poetic intent and method. Mr. Ryder himself says that such defectiveness of plot is inevitable in long poems and gives us the instance of the *Æneid*. His fundamental error is shown in his remark that "the Rama cantos, ten to fifteen, make an epic within an epic". It seems to me that Kalidasa conceived of the whole as an epic poem, and treated the life-story of Sri Rama as an integral and

supremely beautiful portion of it but only as a portion. Once again I say that if Homer wrote his great epic poem to show how out of trifling causes spring devastating wars and if Virgil wrote his great epic poem to suggest and describe the origin and destiny of the Roman race and if Dante wrote his great epic poem to present to dwellers on earth the eternal regions of hell and purgatory and paradise and if Milton wrote his poem on the creation and fall of man to vindicate the ways of God to men, Kalidasa's express object is to describe the lives of perfect kings who were also perfect men so as to picture the eternal racial ideals and warn our kings and our people about their disaster if they departed from those fundamental ideals. With perfect art the poet has placed in the centre the story of Sri Rama who is incarnate God-head come into the world of men to teach man how to be perfect men and how by being perfect men to attain the bliss of God-head. He has called his poem *Raghuvamsa* and says रत्नमाम्बयं वक्ष्ये. He evidently thought that it was the perfection of King Raghu which made the lineage worthy of the incarnation of Raghava (Sri Rama). The very word *Raghuvamsa* is found in the Ramayana in the



9th verse in the 3rd sarga of the Balakanda and in the 11th verse in the 1st sarga of the Yuddhakanda.

I am thus of opinion that it is wrong to say that "there is a lack of unity of plot" in the poem. *Raghuvamsa* is a unitive and integrated epic giving us the ideals of perfect manhood, forming a treasury of the racial life, and intended as a national warning. The verses translated above contain the key-ideas of the poem. The ideals of purity from birth, resolute and victorious pursuit of ideals, sovereign guidance over the whole earth, soaring freedom of movement, acquisition for munificence, courtesy and chivalry and hospitality, punishment for purification, perfect measure in thought and word and deed, and a disciplined regulation of life from birth to death — seeking sacred and secular knowledge in youth, seeking not merely the pleasures of married life but also its graces and obligations and sanctities for glory of lineage and service of country and of God, seeking an austere yet universally helpful old age, and seeking above all exit from life not through disease but through Yoga — throb in these pages.

I have said above that the poem is a record, a treasury, a prophecy, and a warning. I see a great purpose in Kalidasa's beginning the poem with cow-worship and the linking of the city and the hermitage. Cow-worship is not a mere fad or superstition of a nerveless and thin-blooded race. It is not a mere glorification of an economic idea. It is a symbol and a shrine of a great race-idea. The cow is a symbol of innocence and purity and service and sinlessness. Its protection is a symbol of the ideal of chivalry. The very names of God as Gopala and Pasupati show how the ideas for which the cow stands have gone into the vitals of our people. Equally vital is the ideal of the hermitage. We have always kept our social life sweet and sane and supreme by linking it with super-social ideals. The rich stream of life-giving ideas flowed all through the entire body social from the heart of the *Tapovana*. Kalidasa shows how a people upholding these ideals deserved and attained universal suzerainty as idealised in Raghu's life. Nay, he makes us see how such a people and such a lineage alone could deserve the supreme glory of the incarnation of God. He shows us at the same time the devitalisation of

the people by pleasure and by a turning away from the great ideals of the Hindu race. The ideals of purity and of disciplined chastity, of courtesy and chivalry, and of piety of renunciation were given up and lost. The result was not only the loss of universal sovereignty and even self-rule which the race had ceased to deserve but also self-ruination by self-devitalisation. Instead of kings who cast off the body through *Yoga* after a fulfilled life which served the people and raised them to the pinnacle of universal overlordship we had King Agnivarna who died of consumption. The poet living in a great age of racial glory points to a great age of glory in the past and also warns the people against a possible (and as the events have shown the certain) decline and fall of the Hindu race if they and their kings departed from the root-ideals of the race.

It is thus clear to me that the poem has not come down to us in an imperfect form. The epic is not incomplete or mutilated and does not end abruptly as Mr. Ryder says "with this strange scene, half-tragic, half-vulgar". It ends deliberately with perfect art. Mr. Ryder, with strange inconsistency, blames Kalidasa for

spoiling a fine tragic story in *Vikramorvasiyam* and says at the same time that Kalidasa should not and would not have ended this epic poem with a tragic note. The feeble and scanty tradition that the poem had twentyfive cantos is in my opinion wrong. Mr. Ryder says that a literary work should according to the rules of art end with a benedictory epilogue. I am not aware of any such inflexible rule in the case of the Kavyas or epic poems. Mr. Ryder's guess that the last six cantos may not have been preserved as they were not to be a school text is the wildest of conjectures. If the Agnivarna canto was thought fit to be preserved, why should the later cantos have been left to die? The numerous commentators who have annotated the epic have known only the current text of nineteen cantos. I have shown above that the close of the poem is not "a lame and impotent conclusion" but a deliberate and artistic conclusion.

I have already shown above how the view that *Raghuvamsa* must have been written before *Kumarasambhava* is incorrect. The fact that in *Raghuvamsa* the poet describes himself with becoming modesty is no indication at all. The

poem is a work of Kalidasa's ripe maturity. It does not contain the glorious exuberance of feeling and style of *Kumarasambhava*. The *Meghasandesā* shows a riper mellowness than *Kumarasambhava*. But it is in *Raghuvamsa* that we find the poet taking the widest range of all and showing life in all its inter-linkedness of failure and success and of hell and earth and heaven. I am of opinion that it is the latest and most mature of his poems, just as *Sakuntala* is the last and most mature of his dramas, and is probably his latest work !

Mr. A. B. Keith has made in his *Classical Sanskrit Literature* some curious remarks in regard to *Raghuvamsa*. He says: "The more mature genius of Kalidasa manifests itself in the *Raghu-vamsa* in his insistence on the *Yoga* aspect of philosophy, rather than on the personal aspect of the divinity in the *Kumara-sambhava*. He recognises the three Gunas or constituents, which make up nature in the *Samkhya-Yoga* belief and the existence of spirit, but with the *Yoga* he admits a deity. How precisely he conceived existence, whether the divergences of spirit and matter were for him reconciled in the Absolute, we cannot attempt

to decide; what is important is that he represents his heroes as seeking release from rebirth by the methods of Yoga, mentioning the technical terms *Dharana*, concentration, and *Virasana*, a special posture deemed suited to aid the attainment of the end desired. He alludes also to the magic powers which Yoga gives, the ability to penetrate a closed door, as well as the higher attainment desired by Sita of reunion with her beloved in a future life. Vishnu, indeed, in the *Raghuvamsa* receives his meed of devotion, as was inevitable in an epic of Rama, but Siva remains the highest expression of the poet's conception of divinity, for Siva is a *Yogin par excellence*, though Vishnu follows in his train". I am afraid that this criticism is full of those half-truths which are worse than downright untruths. The *Kumara-sambhava* concentrates on Yoga even more than *Raghuvamsa*, and some of the finest descriptions of Yoga in all literature occurs in *Kumara-sambhava*. On the other hand the personal aspect of God is more emphasised in the story of Rama in *Raghuvamsa* than in the story of Siva in *Kumarasambhava*. Mr. Keith seems to feel a most inexplicable and remarkable doubt about Kalidasa's Samkhya-Yoga as he calls it. I shall

show in my second Volume on *The Genius of Kalidasa* the quintessence of Kalidasa's religious doctrine. He was a most catholic exponent of that most catholic of all religions—Vedantism. His so-called Samkhya-Yoga is but a phase of his Vedantic creed and can never be understood without reference to it. Kalidasa never felt puzzled by spirit and matter and the Absolute. He harmonised them perfectly. Mr. Keith speaks with a suppressed lack of conviction and an under current of unfaith about Kalidasa's heroes seeking release from rebirth through the methods of Yoga. In the description of Uma he shows the attainment of life's auspiciousness—as apart from release—by Yoga. His sneer about “the magical powers which Yoga gives, the ability to penetrate a closed door” we can afford to pass by. But Kalidasa does not exalt Yoga above Bhakti and Jnana. Nor does he exalt Siva above Vishnu. Mr. Keith's views on these matters are obviously unsound and will be proved to be so in my later volume.

Equally incorrect is his half-praise of Kalidasa in a later portion of the same volume. He says: “We need not seek in Kalidasa for

any solution or suggested solution of the mysteries of life; with the orthodox view of his time he seems to have been duly content. "We can detect here a note of contempt mingling with the note of half-praise. I shall show in my later volume how Kalidasa did not stand up for any rigid and soulless orthodoxy and how he gives a satisfactory solution of the mysteries of life.

Nor is there any justification for Mr. Keith's view that in describing Raghu's conquest of the world, Kalidasa is giving us "a poetic reflex of the achievements" of Samudragupta and Chandragupta and suggesting to us their glorious military achievement. He says:—"Kalidasa extols the sway of the Guptas and the Brahminical restoration by reminding his audience of the glories of the foregone days of the solar race". I have already shown the hollowness of this theory. We might urge with more plausibility that he referred rather to Vikramaditya's victories, because at least the word *aditya* (sun) suggests the solar line of kings.

With what a perfect opening stanza the poem opens! It says:—"To Parvati and



Paramesvara who are the parents of the universe and who are in union like speech and thought, I bow for attaining perfect speech and thought." Is not poetry perfect speech embodying perfect thought? I cannot imagine a more perfect commencement for a poem. Yet no less a scholar than Pandit R. Krishnamachariar hurled, in his *Raghuvamsa Vimarsa*, his shafts of ridicule at this commencement of the poem, saying that it was worthy of a mere Vedic scholar or a pious Brahmin and that the simile employed in the verse is not an illuminative simile worthy of Kalidasa and that thence the stanza must be an interpolation. Yet with a strange self-forgetfulness he begins his own critique with the famous verse of Dandin:—

हृदमन्धं तमः कृत्स्नं जायते भुवनत्रयम् ।

यदि शब्दाद्वयं ज्योतिरा संसारं न दीप्यते ॥

Does it follow that because Kalidasa began *Kumarasambhava* with *Vastunirdesa* i. e., a direct reference to the story or because other poets did so, he could not begin a poem with *Asirvada* or *Namaskara* (benediction or reverential prostration)? The classical direction is:—

आशीर्नमस्क्रियावस्तुनिर्देशो वापि तन्मुखम् ।

I am referring to such a piece of crude criticism to point out the need for a reverential approach when dealing with such a master of the poetic art as Kalidasa. To proceed to a description of the poem itself, the poet plunges straight into the story. King Dilipa is one of the great kings of the solar race. Broad and tall and strong he was the incarnation of chivalry. His wisdom was equal to his beauty; his culture was equal to his wisdom; his activity was equal to his culture; and his attainment was equal to his activity. Under his lead his subjects went along the narrow path of righteous life as laid down by Manu, just as the wheels of a car obediently follow the charioteer's will. He received taxes from his subjects only to distribute the same in a suitable and effective manner for the public weal, just as the sun takes water in the form of vapour only to give it back with a thousand-fold blessing in the form of rain. He had a powerful army but his culture and prowess brought him victory and prosperity and he had no need to use military force any where and at any time. He kept his state secrets well and

extended his sway to achieve peace and prosperity. His endeavours became known only after successful attainment. He was measured in speech though of unmeasured culture, he was merciful though matchless in valour; and he was not vain though he was unrivalled in liberality. In fact as good qualities love one another's company, one good quality after another came to him and resided in him. He was the real father of his people as he gave universal education and protected all by his justice and provided employment for the entire nation. His fortwalls were the shores of the universal seas; his moats were the oceans themselves; and he ruled as one city the entire earth which never felt such a unitive rule before. His queen was named Sudakshina. They had only one grief—the sorrow of sonlessness. They left the cares of State in the hands of the ministers of State and started for the sage Vasishta's hermitage to learn from him the means of attaining God's grace resulting in the birth of a noble son to adorn the line and rule the world. They went in their chariot unattended by servants as they did not wish to cause inconvenience to the hermits in the forest. They went in their

chariot through the country roads breathing the sweet and cool and gentle and fragrant air from lotus ponds. They saw with delight the dancing peacocks and the large-eyed deer. As they went along, the glad and grateful villagers blessed them with brimming eyes and hearts. At sunset they reached Vasishtha's hermitage. They saw the hermits returning with holy grass and sweet fruits. The wives of the sages were watering the trees in the hermitage. The deer were freely roaming about or resting there in peace. The king and the queen bowed before the sage. The king told him about his heartache and prayed for guidance. Vasishta told him that on a former occasion he had unwittingly treated the divine cow Surabhi with disrespect and that the latter had cursed him with sonlessness until he pleased and propitiated her own offspring. The sage said ; "Surabhi's child Nandini is here. If the queen and yourself tend and please it, your wish will be fulfilled." At that time the cow returned to the hermitage. It was red in colour like a tender leaf and had white mark and shone like the sunset lit by the crescent moon. The king and queen began to carry out the commands of the sage. The second canto describes how during twenty-one

days the queen-tended the cow at home after due worship and the king accompanied it during its wanderings in the forest. On the twenty-second day the cow, was attacked by a lion. The king tried to let loose his shaft to kill the lion but felt his arm become suddenly limp and powerless. The lion then spoke with a human voice saying that he was a servant of God Siva and had been appointed to guard that forest and live on such animals as trespassed there. Dilipa perceiving that a fight with earthly weapons would be ineffectual prayed to the lion to leave the cow harmless and accept his own body. The lion told him : "You have universal sovereignty and you have also youth and beauty. Why do you sacrifice these for the sake of such a petty thing as a cow ? If compassion for the cow is your motive, you save only the cow. But if you live you can protect millions of subjects. If the sage gets angry you can propitiate him by the gift of crores of such cows. Save your body which is born to enjoy a succession of royal pleasures." Dilipa replied to this sophistry : "A Khastriya is a man who saves (त्रायते) others from injuries (शत्रु). If I act otherwise what is the use of my sovereignty or even my life tainted by the odium of abuse ? I

cannot please the sage by the gift of other cows. Know this cow to be Surabhi's child. I offer my body to you. Take it and be satisfied and leave this cow to go unharmed. Do not be kind to this physical body but be kind to my fame-body. I do not have any attachment to this perishable physical frame." The king then placed his body near the lion's mouth. But the illusion vanished in a trice. The cow told him: "Not even the God of Death can touch me, because of the power of the sage. I merely tested you. I am pleased with thy devotion to the sage and thy compassion for me. Ask for a boon." The king was overjoyed and asked for the boon of a child and was granted the boon. The king then returned with the cow to the hermitage. He and his queen drank the cow's milk and returned to the capital with accomplished vow and attained desire.

In opening his epic poem Kalidasa was actuated by a high epic motive. The Indian civilisation of which the poem is a presentation and panorama, though wisely urbanised and with attained potencies of political power and refinements of æsthetic culture, was never out of touch with village life and was in wise

interlinking with pastoral and forest life. Further, it had its inspiration from the Tapovanas where lived godly men who were beloved of gods and men. Its idealisation of the cow was one of its special graces and distinctions. Kalidasa desired, as shown above, to emphasise these aspects and hence began with the story of Dilipa. It has been asked by critics why he began with Dilipa and not with the Sun-God himself or with Manu. To my mind it appears that the clue lies in his desire to present by means of the poem, by means of the art of suggestiveness (*Dhvani*) of which he is a past master, a mirror to the race to behold itself in its true and essential perfection.

The third canto describes Raghu's birth and glory. Raghu was born as the son of Dilipa and Sudakshina. At his birth five planets were in the ascendant—a fact which is recorded in respect of Sri Rama's horoscope also. The poet records also that at his birth gentle and pure breezes blew and the skies were clear and the world was full of auspiciousness and that such births are for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Even the gods in heaven rejoiced at his birth. The poet then

describes in detail Raghu's childhood and youth and education and marriage and anointment as the heir-apparent. It is noteworthy that with perfect self-restraint he refrains from describing Raghu's queen, leaving himself the fullest freedom of such description in regard to Aja, because the story of the love of Aja and Indumati lends itself to a first-rate poetic handling and elaboration. With Raghu's aid Dilipa performed ninety-nine *asvamedhas* or horse sacrifices. When the hundredth sacrifice was begun and the horse was set free to roam at will for a year, Indra stole it. When Raghu taunted him, Indra replied: "Just as Hari alone is known as Purushottama and as Siva alone is known as Mahesvara, so the sages know me alone as Satakratu i. e., the performer of a hundred sacrifices. Yet your father desires to perform his hundredth sacrifice and eclipse my fame". Then ensued a great fight between them. Though hit by Indra's Vajra, Raghu showed wonderful fight. Indra then said: "I am pleased with your prowess. Ask for anything but the horse." Raghu then asked him to give to his father the fruit of the sacrifice. Indra agreed and sent his charioteer Matali to inform Dilipa.



The fourth canto describes the wonderful exploits of Raghu. Dilipa left him in charge of the kingdom and retired to the forest along with his queen, because such is the family vow (*Kulavrata*) of the kings of the solar race. Raghu's reign was of a unique glory. Though great kings had preceeded him, yet his qualities were of matchless attractiveness. He loved his people and was loved by them. He then began his career of world-conquest. As he went in his onward military march, deserts had tanks and lakes dug in them, bridges were thrown across unfordable rivers, and forests were cleared for settlement and colonisation. Thus conquest and civilisation went hand in hand. He conquered the dominions up to the eastern sea (the Bay of Bengal). He conquered only the unbending foes and that for the sake of Dharma (अनञ्जानां समुद्धर्ता and धर्मविजयी). He then went south and conquered the states up to and inclusive of the Pandya kingdom, and received immense presents of pearls from the Pandya King. He then went westward and northward and conquered the countries there. He went by the land-route and vanquished the *Parasikas* (Persians) and the Huns. He planted pillars of victory (*Jayastambhas*) everywhere.

Then Raghu performed the great sacrifice of *Visvajit* (i.e., the conquest of the universe). The fifth canto describes it and the later incidents in his reign. After he had given away all his belongings in that sacrifice, Kautsa who was the disciple of Varatantu, went to him to request him to give money for payment as Gurudakshina (teaching fees) to his master. Kautsa, who was asked by the king to state his desire, was sorry that he had come too late, as he needed four crores of rupees to give the same as teaching fee to his teacher. The King told him: "Let not the world say of me that a request was meant to be made to me and was not granted, Please wait for two or three days." Raghu then prepared for a fight with Kubera, the god of wealth. Learning this Kubera sent a shower of gold into the king's treasury. With it the king satisfied the waiting sage. By the blessings of the sage a noble child was born to Raghu. Raghu gave the name of Aja to the prince.

Cantos five to eight deal with Aja and are full of poetic charm. He travels to attend the *svayamvara* (self-choosing of bridegroom) by princess Indumati. On his way his party is

attacked by a wild elephant. He kills it. It became a Gandharva (demigod). The latter praised Aja and stated how he had been cursed to become an elephant. He gave to Aja a celestial weapon called *Sammohana*. In the svayamvara-hall of Indumati, all the princely suitors sit in thrones. To the sound of sweet music enters in a litter the princess in bridal dress. So beautiful she was that she drew all eyes and hearts, and only the king's bodies adorned the thrones. Her maid-servant describes each king to her but she signs to the bearers of the litter to move on. Here occurs in the poem the famous simile which has given to the poet the name Deepasika Kalidasa. "Just as when a lit lamp is taken down a street, the houses in front are bright and those left behind are wrapt in darkness, so the king whom Indumati was yet to pass were bright and eager and happy whereas the Kings whom she had passed were gloomy and depressed." She eventually chose Aja as her lord and placed the bridal garland round his neck. Then the marriage of Aja and Indumati took place amidst great pomp and rejoicing. When they returned, the discarded Kings surrounded him on the way and attacked him. But he hurled the celestial

weapon *Sammohana* at them and stupefied them all and bore away his beautiful bride.

King Raghu then handed over the kingdom to Aja and desired to betake himself to the forest. The people loved Aja regarding him : Raghu returned to his youth, and he loved the people and ruled them with ability and righteousness. When Raghu wished to go to a forest Aja fell at his feet and prayed him to stay. Raghu then lived in retirement in a hermitage close by. Aja ruled the kingdom ; Raghu ruled himself. Aja sought the counsel of ministers ; Raghu sought the counsel of yogis. Aja was incarnate prosperity ; Raghu was incarnate renunciation. Aja sat on the radiant throne ; Raghu sat on the holy grass. Aja rejoiced in activity ; Raghu rejoiced in his retirement. Aja conquered the enemies of the land ; Raghu subdued the foes of the soul. Each was great in his own line and in his own way. Aja became one with his people ; Raghu became one with God. These verses in the poem are full of sonorous music, and stately thought. In the fulness of time Raghu left his immortal name on earth and went to heaven.

Some years later a son was born to Aja and was named Dasaratha. Aja was deeply attached to his beautiful queen and used to spend much of his time with her in the palace-gardens. One day the sage Narada went to Gokarna to worship at the shrine of God Siva there. He had his Vina on his hand, and as he was going through the upper regions the garland of flowers placed on it fell down. The garland fell on Indumati and she suddenly took ill and expired in the lap of the king. Aja was overwhelmed with grief. His lament as described in the eighth canto is full of poignant pathos and is one of the most beautiful episodes in the poem. Aja cried out in grief; "Can even soft flowers cause death? Death comes through any means if Fate has resolved to smite. The soft-falling snow bears death to the soft lotus flower. I place this garland on me so that it may slay me as well. But it has no effect on me. Even nectar becomes poison somewhere and poison becomes nectar. Such is God's command. This garland has become a thunderbolt because of my evil fortune. The thunder-bolt has struck the creeper twining round the tree but has not struck the tree itself. You would not be rough to me even when I was in fault. How then

can you leave me thus when I did no wrong? I must have been an evil soul or else you would not have gone away like this once for all. The south wind yet gently stirs your fragrant tresses decorated with flowers. How can I place on the rough funeral pyre your fair frame fit to lie on downy beds? These trees and creepers yearn for you. You used to tend them lovingly every day. The Asoka tree sheds its flowers like tears. You were to me wife, queen, minister, disciple and comrade. When Death took you he took away every thing in life from me". Thus lamented the king in desolation of spirit. Vasishtha sent words of counsel and consolation to him. But these words found no place in the heart of the king who had lost his only true and precious joy in life. For eight long years he bore the pangs of grief for the sake of his boy. He then crowned his son as king and left his body at the junction of the Ganga and the Sarayu and went to heaven and met his beloved in the Nandana garden in Indra's paradise.

The ninth canto describes King Dasaratha and cantos ten to fifteen deal with the story of Rama. It seems to me that the highest art of the poet is shown here. He has expanded what

is condensed in the Ramayana and has condensed what has been elaborated with wonderful beauty of thought and style in Valmiki's immortal epic. In the ninth canto he has shown how magic felicities of sound could be introduced into metres in Sanskrit. He gives us a splendid description of Dasaratha's sovereignty and his queens and his memorable hunt during which the sonless King received a curse of separation from his son—a curse which proved a blessing to him and to the world. There occurs in the ninth canto a magnificent description of spring which shows how Kalidasa's youthful poetic power as displayed in *Ritusamhara* has taken a higher range and achieved a higher perfection after the ripening of his powers. The poet also gives us a carefully executed description of Dasaratha's hunt. The description is rich in detail and is worthy of the poet. In the tenth canto the poet takes up for description a beautiful scene left by Valmiki with a scanty reference. Valmiki was emphasising the humanness of Rama while hinting his supreme divinity. Kalidasa emphasised the divineness of Rama while showing that he was a perfect man. He thus showed the way to later poets, who adopted his method and reaped an

abundant harvest of spiritual beauty from the field of the story. The description of God Vishnu in the milky ocean is at the same time lovely and sublime. The hymn to God Vishnu in the tenth canto is full incandescent spiritual feeling and is the highest synthesis of Indian religious thought. The poet covers in a few verses the story so perfectly elaborated by Valmiki in six Kandas. But where he could get an opportunity to describe a great scene which was not perfectly and elaborately described by Valmiki, he does not miss it. Such is the description of the contest between Parasurama and Sri Rama. In fact Kalidasa's presentation of Sri Rama's life is a series of vignettes than a grand painting upon an extended canvas. The poet however embarks upon a most beautiful and poetic description of the return journey of Sita and Rama in the aerial car Pushpaka. Here was a poetic opportunity afforded to him by Valmiki. Further, he had already described North India and its spots of supreme interest in the Meghasandesa. Here was an equally splendid opportunity to describe South India and the poet availed himself of it in an ample measure and showed his wonderful powers of graphic poetic description. Even in this grand



description, probably the grandest is the description of the mingled waters of the Ganges and the Jumna in verses 54 to 57 in the thirteenth canto. The description of the abandoned Sita in the fourteenth canto gives the poet another splendid opportunity to describe the feelings of the human heart in its bare desolation and its purity and fortitude, and the result is a marvel of the poetic art. The description of Sita's farewell in the fifteenth canto is another marvel. The poet shows how the fickle people whose blame of Rama led to his abandonment of Sita were moved to penitent tears on hearing the Ramayana sung by Kusa and Lava. Thus poesy purified by pity their vision which nought else could purify, just as poesy was enkindled by pity in the case of Valmiki's heart itself. Sita appeared in the assembly. The very appearance of that perfection of purity carried emotion to the national heart. The people stood mute with shamed and sorrowful hearts. In response to Sita's appeal to prove her purity by appearing and bearing her away, the Earth-Goddess appeared in glory and took her, her last look being on her Rama's adored and adoring face. This is one of the greatest scenes

in literature and nobly has the poet rendered it. Thus it seems to me that Kalidasa's rendering of the story of Rama shows his wonderful genius and his perfect artistic sense.

Rama then established his brothers and sons, and nephews as kings in different Kingdoms and performed the funeral rites of Dasaratha's queens and then went to his paradise, preceded by Lakshmana. His other brothers and the citizens of Ayodhya followed him and entered the Sarayu river and rose up and went to paradise. Kusa and Lava had Kusavati and Saravati as their capital cities. One night when Kusa lay awake he saw a female figure in widowed grief. She told him that she was the presiding deity of the ancient capital Ayodhya which had been deserted since Rama's departure to paradise. Kalidasa evidently took the idea from the presiding deity of Lanka as described in the Ramayana. Then follows a fine description of the deserted city. The goddess begged Kusa to return to the ancient capital city (*Kularajadhani*). He then transferred his capital to Ayodhya and restored it to its former splendour. Then follows a line description of a bath of Kusa and his queens in

the Sarayu river. During that bath the jewel got by Rama from Agastya and given to him by Rama fell into the river and was taken away by the serpent Kumuda's sister Kumudavati. Kusa then prepared to hurl the Garuda weapon (astra) to kill Kumuda. Kumuda at once brought the jewel and also his sister Kumudavati and gave her in marriage to Kusa. The son of Kusa and Kumudavati was Athithi. Sometime after his birth Kusa was killed in the process of killing a demon. He went to heaven followed by his loving queen. Athithi then became the King. The poet describes in extenso the great qualities of the king and the splendours of his coronation.

In the eighteenth canto we have a brief sketch of twentyone kings who succeeded Athithi one after another. The last canto describes King Agnivarman who spent his life in ignoble dissipation and died a premature and unlamented death through consumption. Whenever he had to show himself to his subjects he used to dangle his foot out of a window. He lived in the palace of art and sense-delights and forgot his people and God. The poet describes in a beautiful verse how song and dance





beguiled the King's passionate hours and how he was always in the soft fetters of maidens' arms. The poet says that the King was absorbed in the joys of the senses (एवमिन्द्रिय-सुखानि निर्विशन्) How far we are away here from the manly and godly life described in the opening verses of the poem! What an ignoble end! While the other kings flung away their bodies—which had done their meed of service of God and man—by their power of yogic will, Agnivarna died of a wasting disease which foiled the skill of the physicians of the king. Instead of

शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम् ।

वार्धके मुनिवृत्तीनां योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम् ॥

we have one who may be described thus :

बाल्येऽनभ्यस्तविद्यस्य यौवने विषयैषिणः ।

वार्धके विटवृत्तेश्च रोगेनान्ते तनुज्यजः ॥

His ministers cremated him secretly in a portion of the royal garden. But his queen carried on the Government in a royal and righteous way with the aid of the wise ministers of state. She was pregnant and the people waited for the birth of the child, knowing and expecting that a great ruler will

come to rule and protect the land. I have stated and shown above that the poem did not end abruptly and was not left incomplete. What did the poet imply by the ignoble end of Agnivarna, the rule of the queen, and the expectation by the people of a great King to come? I have no doubt that living in a great and heroic age he felt—great and fine-strung souls have premonitions of coming troubles and utter poignant words of warning—that the time might come when India's glory might disappear. It disappeared in Agnivarna's reign, and India waited for the Messiah to come after Agnivarna. The poet is not afraid of a melancholy and tragical close. As Shakespeare had a period of ebullition of tragic feeling, even so had Kalidasa. Both passed from radiant youth through observant and pessimistic manhood to a calm and penignant maturity of age. I shall show below how the prophecy with which Sakuntala closes has a ring of reached faith in the people and their high destiny.





## CHAPTER XII

### **Malavikagnimitra**

**I**N this play we find Kalidasa's prentice-hand.

The *Prastavana* or introduction contains a verse (पुराणमित्येव) which shows that Kalidasa was making his *debut* as a dramatist and was diffident about the manner of his reception in that capacity by the public. But we find in the play the characteristics which afterwards blossomed forth in full perfection in *Sakuntala*. The eminent scholar Shankar Pandurang Pandit has, in his excellent edition of the play, shown what analogies of diction and thought are to be found in the three plays of Kalidasa. He says: "It is the repetition of those analogous expressions, phrases and ideas with a characteristic *frequency* in each of the compositions that is of importance in determining the identity of their author." Professor H. H. Wilson is hence wrong in thinking that Kalidasa was probably not the author of *Malavikagnimitra*



and that the play might be the production of another Kalidasa who lived perhaps in the tenth or eleventh century A. D. or even later. He says that "there is neither the same melody in the verse nor fancy in the thoughts" as compared with *Vikramorvasiya* and *Sakuntala*, and that "the manners described appear to be that of a degenerate state of Hindu society." Mr. A. W. Ryder says, "It shows no originality of plot, no depth of passion. It is a light graceful drama of court intrigue." Neither of these criticisms is just. The verse is as melodious and the poetry is as imaginative in this play as in the two other plays. The play does not allow the same scope for flights of fancy and imagination as the sister plays but the poet's delicate grace of fancy scintillates in it as well. The play delineates the life of a King in court and camp and harem and has not that mingling of city and forest and earth and heaven which the two other plays have got. Professor Weber rightly points out: "Both rest moreover upon a mythical background and consequently bear a more magnificent and ideal character; the *Malavikagnimitra* portrays the life in the court of a historic prince, and consequently the bare actuality, with its self-made and therefore

scanty concerns." Even more than this fact the cause of the slight inferiority of *Malavikagnimitra* is the circumstance that it is Kalidasa's first attempt at dramatic composition. Wilson's criticism about *Malavikagnimitra* delineating a degenerate state of Hindu society is equally unsound. In the case of every drama of love intrigue we can exalt it or condemn it according to our angle of vision. There is undoubtedly a deeper note of pathos and passion struck in *Vikramorvasiya* and *Sakuntala* than in *Malavikagnimitra*. But the love depicted in all the plays is as pure as it is tender. We must not allow ourselves to be carried away by the fact that Agnimitra was already married. Vikrama and Dushyanta were already married as well. Indian princes married more than once save in the case of illustrious personages like Sri Rama. I shall show presently how the state of society depicted in the play can in no wise be called degenerate at all.

In this play we find not only Kalidasa's charming ideas expressed in charming language, but we find also other fine traits peculiar to Kalidasa. The prologue is as short and full of modesty as in the case of the two other plays.

The play shows Kalidasa's fondness for the Arya metre as much as the other plays. In short though the play does not show as much poetic fancy or knowledge of the human heart as the other two plays, it is of a high order of merit and contains unmistakeable traces of Kalidasa's handiwork. Even in Shakespeare we find inequalities of attainment due to the author's time of life, the theme, and other factors of literary composition. There could thus be no doubt about Kalidasa's authorship of the play.

The story of the play is not one that lends itself to the delineation of the deeper elements of life. One day king Agnimitra, who was king of Vidisa, saw the painted figure of Malavika in the picture of his queen Dharini and her attendants. He fell in love with her painted form and asked his friend Gautama, the Vidushaka, to arrange to enable him to see her. She was a pupil of Ganadasa who was the queen's dancing master. Gautama fomented a quarrel between Ganadasa and the king's dancing master Haradatta. Both these persons asked the king to decide as to who was the superior in their art. The king said that he

and the queen and Pandita Kausiki who was a *Sanyasini* or female ascetic should form the committee of judges. Then all of them witnessed Malavika's representation of a song by means of voice and dance and gesture. The king fell deeply in love with her and she also fell in love with him. One day Malavika was ordered by the queen to perform the *dohada* ceremony in respect of an *asoka* tree in the palace garden. The *dohada* ceremony is one by which flowerless and fruitless trees are said to be made bloomful and fruitful. In respect of an *asoka* tree the ceremony consists of a kick by the decorated foot of a young and beautiful maiden. To perform this ceremony Malavika was deputed by the queen, and she and her friend Bakulavalika went to the garden for that purpose. The king along with the Vidushaka had gone to the garden at the same time because the junior queen Iravati had asked him to go there. He met Malavika in the garden but before he exchanged a word with her Iravati came on the scene and upbraided him and went away despite his entreaties. Queen Dharini, on learning about the incident, had both Malavika and Bakulavalika placed in fetters and ordered that they should not be released unless her signet.

ring was brought. Thereupon the Vidushaka, some time later, pricked his finger and cried out that he was bitten by a serpent. The court physician to whom the Vidushaka was sent said that to effect a cure something having a serpent's figure should be placed in water. Queen Dharini, thereon gave her signet ring which had such a figure. The Vidushaka used it to get Malavika and her friend released. The King met Malavika in the harbour. But Iravati turned up then accidentally and grew furious. But meantime the *dohada* had been successful and the asoka tree was in full bloom. Queen Dharini had promised to grant Malavika's desire if the asoka tree blossomed well. It was also ascertained that Malavika was of royal birth. Thereupon Queen Dharini requested King Agnimitra to accept her as a junior queen. The play closes with such espousals in an atmosphere of hymeneal joy.

In such a story there could not possibly be any sounding of the depths of passion. We have not got here "a pair of star-crossed lovers" nor was there any occasion.

"To shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
From this world-wearied flesh"

But we have here a pure passion and its seeming mishaps and its sure success. There are no innocent adulteries or indelicacies of love in Kalidasa. His comedy is not like the Restoration comedies of English literature—me , decorated and lace-garmented rottenness. The mere fact that Agnimitra is a much-married King is not of much consequence. It is better to be polygamous than to be a Bluebeard or a Henry VIII. Further we should not judge the marital ideals of one age or land in the light of those of another age or clime. Hindu princes used to marry many queens. It is not a fair criticism to say that the play describes a degenerate state of Hindu society.

The play is valuable in that it shows a freedom from being tied down to Puranic themes and exhibits a real power of presentation of contemporary social life. I have shown in an earlier chapter how Kalidasa and Agnimitra were probably contemporaries. The play shows also a flexible state of Hindu society when Buddhism had not yet gone completely out of the land but Hinduism had triumphantly reasserted itself. It refers to a period when the Hindu race was vigorous in war and politics as well as in the fine

arts and in the pleasures and refinements of social life.

Further, it belongs to a time when the Sanskrit language was the spoken language of the upper classes or was at least well understood by them. That is the reason why it has not got the stiffness and stilted pedantry of style which vitiates the studio Sanskrit dramas of a later date. The style of Kalidasa is always free from straining after effect and from elaborations and complications of style. Both the verse and the prose portions of his plays have a directness and a terseness and a naturalness which were certainly due, at least partly, to the larger currency of Sanskrit in his day.

I shall show later on how this play like the other plays of Kalidasa contains subtle suggestions, and even wonderful expositions, of Aesthetics. Though *Sringara* (love) is the chief *rasa* (emotional mood) of the play, the drama contains also elements of *Hasa* (comedy), *Karuna* (pathos) and *Vira* (heroism). It shows his great mastery over the sister arts of song and dance as well. It shows also Kalidasa's wide and varied learning and observation of nature and humanity. As I am dealing with these

aspects elsewhere in this work I make only a brief and passing reference thereto here.

We have in the play a full length portrait of King Agnimitra. He is every inch a gentleman. He is as successful in arms as in love. His over-lordship over other kingdoms is assured and ensured. His Commander-in-chief Virasena carries his arms successfully into the kingdom of Vidarbha. But though the Vidarbha king Yajnasena was beaten, he was not deprived of his throne, though he had imprisoned his cousin Madhavasena who was proceeding with his sister and others to king Agnimitra with the object of contracting a matrimonial alliance. Agnimitra divides the conquered territory between Yajnasena and Madhavasena, making the Varada river the boundary between them. I shall show later on how Hindu suzerainty always aimed at unifying India as a state without uprooting the minor kingdoms. Agnimitra shows other traits of a great Hindu King when he takes the above step only after getting the sanction of his cabinet (*mantri parishad*). His cabinet approves of his action and informs him that by dividing the domain and controlling the two kings by his superior will, he would have



two friends instead of an enemy and would also convert two enemies into friends. By an expressive simile it is stated that they would be like two steeds acting jointly under the will of the charioteer and bearing along the Lakshmi of national prosperity in the chariot of a beneficent administration (Act V verse 14). Agnimitra is well learned in theoretical state-craft and refers to the Arthasastra (i e., Tantrakaravachanam) in Act I. His son Vasumitra is a great commander of armies just as was his father Pushpamitra. The epilogue shows that he feels sure that there could not be any national calamities during his reign. Thus Kalidasa gives his king a fine setting of political and national life. But for his subtle suggestiveness, the love *motif* in the play would not rise above the level of a court intrigue, especially when the play did not permit the delineations of the higher notes of love which are struck only when sorrow smites the lyre of love.

Kalidasa lifts up the level of the love *motif* in the play in other subtle and delicate ways as well. Even though the object of the rivalry of the dancing masters was to enable the king to have a look at Malavika and though the object

was attained when Malavika came and danced before the king, the latter with true courtesy tells Haradatta that he is eager to witness his pupil's performance and would do so next day. He is tender and considerate to his queens even when they thwart and upraid him. Samabhritika says about him धारिण्यादिचत्तं रक्षन् (considerate to the feelings of Dharini). This *chittarakshana* is one of the many virtues of Agnimitra and instances of it abounded in the play. He moves throughout the play with the composed grace of bearing and manner (*Dakshinya*) that comes only to those who are noble in birth and noble in soul. He says that *Dakshinya* is his *Kulavrata* (family vow). But yet his royal dignity is such that he inspires reverence in all. He is a Dhirodatta as well as a Dhiralalita Nayaka to use the technical expressions of writers on æsthetics and dramaturgy. Mr. Ryder's criticism that "there is in Agnimitra, as in all heroes of his type, something contemptible" may be smart but is not just and true.

But the king is most vividly sketched in the play as a lover. He has a keen and vivid sense of the beautiful in human life as well as in the life of nature. He has a high regard for

womanhood and respects as much the mental graces of women as their physical loveliness. He says निसर्गनिपुणाः स्त्रियः (woman have an inborn and innate keenness of mind). His descriptions of nature and of emotional moods have as much restraint as passion. In fact it is such restrained passion that is the secret of the union of strength and delicacy and sweetness. He says in a great stanza that the highest love is that wherein two lovers of equal and pure passion fling away their lives knowing that fate has denied them the consummation of their love. His love for Malavika was a full and dominating love.

सा वामलोचना मे स्नेहैयकायनीभूता Act II verse 16.

The other male characters in the play need but a slight mention. The dancing masters Haradatta and Ganadasa are slightly but clearly drawn. Ganadasa is proud of his art, irascible, and of fine mettle. The Vidushaka is more fully portrayed in this play than in *Vikramorvasiya* or *Sakuntala*. He is not so full of scintillating wit as the fools of Shakespeare. But he has ingenuity as well as humour. He is not a mere promoter of royal love intrigues. He has a keen love of beauty in nature and in

Human form. He says that in the royal garden the Lakshmi of spring is more fair and decorated than a young maiden.

मधुलक्ष्म्या युवातिवेषलज्जयितृकं वसन्तकुसुमनेपथ्यं गृहीतम्  
and that the spring is of achieved adolescence

परिवृत्तयौवन इव वसन्तः प्रमदवने लक्ष्यते ।

He calls Malavika the honey of the eyes (नयनमधु). He is full of wise reflections on life. He says that learning becomes more expert by teaching.

सुशिक्षितोऽपि सर्वः उपदेशेन निष्णातो भवति ।

He is full of vivid and humorous verbal displays. He calls the king as a kite hovering near a butcher's shop-eager yet afraid. In his turn he is described by Nipunika as a bull in the bazaar which sits and sleeps sitting there.

विपणिगत इव बलिवर्दः आर्यगोतम आसीन एव निद्रायते ।

Among all the female characters, Dharini, Iravati, Malavika and Vakulavalika and Kausiki are well drawn. I am dealing elsewhere with Kalidasa's power of characterisation and referring only to special features in these chapters dealing with his individual

works. The name Dharini itself has been well-chosen. Self-control and capaciousness of soul are her chief traits. She is full of graciousness and dignity. The Parivrajika refers in Act I, verse 16, to her being as forgiving as the earth भूतधारिणी. In the language of Indian aestheticians she is *Pragalbha* and *Dhira*. Her matronliness goes hand in hand with love. She is attached to her lord and to her children and to her dependents. She is well called by Kausika as *Veerapatni* (the wife of a hero) and *Virasunu* (the mother of a hero). She is a keen lover and promoter of art. She rules her royal household wisely and well. The king shows the highest regard to her and the tenderest consideration to her feelings and makes pleasing her one of his prime cares in life. She is as shrewed as she is forgiving. She easily sees through the king's manoeuvre in Act I to have a sight of Malavika and tells him that if he showed as much skill in state affairs as in his affairs of the heart it would redound to his honour and glory. She is loyal to her word. After promising to Malavika that she would fulfil her wish if the Asoka tree blossomed after the *dohada* ceremony, she faithfully carries out her plighted promise. For the sake of her son's

success she offers up prayers and gives gifts of piety. When she learns about her son's victory from her attendant, she loads the latter with jewels so much so that the latter gratefully exclaims that she has become a peripatetic box of jewels. She is thus full of dignity and generosity and other loveable qualities despite her shrewdness and caustic humour.

. Iravati on the other hand is young and passionate and impetuous and impulsive and is flushed with youth and loveliness and wine. She takes offence soon and forgives slowly. In the language of Sanskrit rhetoricians she is *Pragalbha* and *Adhira*. She is fond of pleasure and is always apprehensive that she might be displaced in the king's affections by a younger and lovelier queen. She thus forms a fine foil to Dharini and Malavika.

The character of Malavika is charming and attractive and is painted with all the strokes of art by a genius who is capable of producing the maximum of effects with the minimum of means. She has the highest feminine charms of bashfulness and modesty. Her nature is one of admirable purity and delicacy and sweetness. In the language of Sanskrit rhetoricians she is

a *Mugdha*. She is of a quick mind and becomes an expert in the dancing art with slight instruction. Her tenderness for other's feelings is a marked trait of her character. When she stretches her foot for decoration by Vakulavalika for the *dohada* ceremony, she asks the latter to forgive her rudeness in stretching out her foot. She has quick sensibilities and an affectionate disposition. Her patience during her early trials in life is another pleasing trait in her. She is thus of a quite different type from Dharini and Iravati.

Of the many female attendants in the play, Vakulavalika deserves a prominent mention. She is passionately attached to Malavika and promotes her fortunes with assiduous love. When Malavika besought her forgiveness for stretching out her foot she replied: "You are my own body." When Malavika asks her to help her in her misfortunes, she replies with a pun on her name: "Vakulavalika (the garland of Vakula flowers) smells all the sweeter when it is crushed". The ruling principle in her nature flashes out in her advice to Malavika to requite love by love अनुरागोऽनुरागेण प्रत्येष्टव्य इति सुजनवचनं प्रमाणीकुरु ॥

The picture of Kausiki alone remains to be considered. Kalidasa has tried his uttermost to make it full and attractive. She is an old woman and the Vidushaka makes humorous reference to her moonbeam tresses ((प्रसन्नचन्द्रपाद-सदृशैः केशपाशैः) She is called by one and all *Arya* and *Bhagarati* and *Pandita*. As already pointed out by me Kalidasa does not put in the mouth of the king any words disapproving of a woman's assumption of the orange robe, when she states at the end of the play how she became an ascetic (*Parivrajika*) when her brother was killed in defence of Malavika who was then carried away by the bandits. On the other hand he says that her act was that of good persons (युक्तः सज्जनस्यैव पन्थाः), She is however not an ascetic hating life and human beings, but an ascetic full of love of art and friendliness to all. A saint severely aloof from life would be too high and shadowy for a drama which is concerned with warm-blooded figures in a state of hostile clash or friendly interplay. She is an expert in medical knowledge as well as æsthetic knowledge and artistic appreciation. She is a past master in decorative skill and Queen Dharini asks her to apparel and bejewel Malavika as a queenly bride in a fitting way.



At the same time she knows that in the art of dance the body should not be too heavily loaded by jewels which would encumber the artist and distract the attention of the audience. She says :

“ निर्णयाधिकारे ब्रवीमि । सर्वाङ्गसोष्ठुवाभिष्यक्तये बिरल-  
नेपथ्ययोः प्रवेशोऽस्तु । ”

She shows an intimate knowledge of the art of dance. She is a clever storyteller and is sought by Queen Dharini to while away her time and improve her mind. At the same time she never forgets or omits the ceremonial respect to sovereignty and never went into the royal presence without taking at least a fruit as a present. She had attendants of her own in the palace and was treated with reverential courtesy by all of them. In conclusion, I may well quote the beautiful simile by which the king compares his queen to the Veda (Scripture) and Kausiki to the Adhyatmavidya (the Science of the Soul).

मङ्गलालंकृताभाति कौशिक्यायतिवेषया ।

त्रयीविग्रहवत्येव सममध्यात्मविद्यया ॥

One other aspect of the play also deserves to be borne in mind. It shares with *Mudra-rakshasa* and other plays the distinction of being

a historical play. In Shakespear's plays we find taught the truth that a country cannot prosper unless there are internal harmony and external power, while the panorama of English life is unrolled to us in the course of its evolution. In this play also we have a clear suggestion that there should be a strong central power ruling over a united India.









## CHAPTER XIII.

### Vikramorvasiya.

**T**HIS play is one of great beauty and attractiveness and forms a *sui generis* in the realm of dramatic composition. Mr. Ryder's view that the play is a failure is in my opinion entirely wrong. It is Kalidasa's supreme merit that he had not only an originality of his own in the matter of style and thought but had a distinct and wonderful vein of originality in his choice of themes, in his subtle and artistic transformation of them consistently with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, and in his origination of new literary forms. Just as the *Megha Sandesa* was the first *sandesa kavya*, even so this play is the oldest musical opera in India—an opera in which the charm is heightened by its being woven into a play full of wonderful suggestiveness. Mr. Ryder thinks that the play was the last work of Kalidasa and was probably not produced in his lifetime.

“Some support is lent to this theory by the fact that the play is filled with reminiscences of *Sakuntala*, in small matters as well as in great; as if the poet’s imagination had grown weary and he were willing to repeat himself.” This is a mere guess. I rather think that *Sakuntala* is the poet’s ripest and most mature work. The pet ideas and fancies and expressions of the poet occur in both the plays but this is a natural feature in all poets. If any inference could be drawn from insufficient data, it seems to me that the prayer in the last stanza of *Sakuntala* shows—like the epilogue in the *Tempest*—that the poet is bidding farewell to the world, wishing it well and desiring liberation and beatitude for himself.

*Vikramorvasiya* belongs to the species of dramatic composition known as *Trotaka* which has been thus defined in books on Indian *Æsthetics*.

सप्ताष्टनवपञ्चाङ्गं दिव्यमानुषसंश्रयम् ।

द्वोटकं नाम तत्राहुः प्रत्यङ्गं सविदूषकम् ॥

It must consist of 7 or 8 or 9 or 5 Acts; it must concern both divine and human personages; and the *Vidushaka* (buffoon) should appear in every Act of the play.

There are two recensions of the play, one in Devanagari and Bengali characters with the commentary of Renganatha in A. D. 1656 and the other in South Indian manuscripts with the commentary of Katayavema about A. D. 1400. The former contains Apabhramsa verses with directions as to the mode of singing them but these verses are absent in the South Indian edition. The northern text calls the play a Trotaka while the southern text calls it a Nataka. Mr. Keith has given various reasons for not rejecting the northern manuscript. I have described above what are the essential elements to a Trotaka and it seems to me that the play has got those characteristics.

Kalidasa has used the previous slender elements of the story and transformed them into a great work of Art. The story of the love of Pururavas for Urvashi is as old as the Rig Veda (See X, 195). In the above said Rig Vedic hymn he requests her to bless him with her company *again*. The hymn is explained in the Sathapatha Brahmana, II, 5, 1. The story of the birth of Pururavas himself is interesting to note when we attempt to understand his character. He was the son of King Ila.

Ila entered a forest in respect of which Parvati had ordained that whichever man enters it should become a woman. He became a beautiful woman. God Budha, who is the son of God Chandra, fell in love with her and had Pururavas as his son by her. Ila afterwards became a man by seeking the grace of Parvati.

The story of Pururavas and Urvasi is given in a detailed, though a crude, form in various Puranas such as Bhagavata, Vishnu Purana and Padma Purana. The story runs as follows:—Urvasi was cursed by Gods Mitra and Varuna to leave heaven and become the consort of a mortal. She fell in love with Pururavas and became his consort on condition that he should keep safe her pet rams and should never allow himself to be seen without dress by her. Some *Gandharvas*, with the object of restoring *Urvasi* to heaven, carried off the rams during night. Pururavas jumped naked out of his bed to pursue them. They then flashed a lightning and revealed him to Urvasi's view. Urvasi thereupon flew away to heaven. Pururavas wandered all over the land in search of her. He found her sporting with other heavenly nymphs in a lake in Kurukshetra. She agreed to return to



him and consoled him by going to him once every year. She bore him six sons Ayus, Dhiman, Amavasu, Visvavasu, Satayu and Srutayu. The king wanted to have her company always and was disconsolate when she went away to heaven. The *Gandharvas* gave him a brazier containing fire so that he may perform sacrifices and get the desired boon. He placed it on the ground and went in search of Urvasi. When he returned without finding her he found two trees, a *Sami* tree and an *asvatha* tree, in the spot. He took a branch from each and rubbed them together and produced fire. With such fire he performed many sacrifices and attained to the rank of a *Gandharva* and was blessed with Urvasi's company for ever. In the *Matsyapurana* we find a version which was the one that evidently appealed most to Kalidasa. It is stated in it that Dharma, Artha, and Kama once appeared before Pururavas and asked him to state who was the highest. He awarded the palm to Dharma. Artha thereupon pronounced a curse on him that he should fall through avarice. Kama cursed him and said that he should become separated from his bride Urvasi and wander in the forest of Kumara in the

slopes of the Gandhamadana mountain in a mood of distraction at his separation from his beloved bride. Pururavas had already rescued Urvasi from the demon Kesi and won her heart. One day when Urvasi was personating Lakshmi in the sage Bharata's drama in heaven describing Lakshmi-svayamvara (self-choosing of her lord), she was so engrossed with the thought of her lover that she forgot her part. Bharata cursed her. She was then restored to Pururavas and bore him eight sons viz., Ayus, Dhritayu, Aswayu, Dhanayu, Dhritiman, Vasu, Divijata, and Satayu. The story as narrated in the *Brihatkatha* is slightly different. Urvasi and Pururavas fell in love with each other in heaven. Once while Rambha danced in heaven the king laughed at an error made by her. Tumburu, the teacher of the art of dance in heaven, cursed him to be separated from Urvasi. The king then propitiated God Vishnu at Badarikasrama and regained Urvasi.

Professor Wilson says that the play must have preceded the Puranas for "had it been subsequently composed, the poet would either spontaneously or in deference to sacred authority have adhered more closely, to the

Puranic legend". This seems to me to be an erroneous view. Kalidasa allowed himself the privilege of suiting and shaping his materials so as to bring out his ideals of life and love and satisfy his keen sense of art. This is pre-eminently seen in *Sakuntala*, where he has modified and enriched the story as found in the *Mahabharata*. Would it be right to say that he lived anterior to the *Bharata*! Even very recent poets have taken liberties even with such a story as that of Valmiki's Ramayana. The success of poetic license is its own excuse and justification. As has been well said: अपरे काव्यसंसारे कविरेव प्रजापतिः (the poet is the free creator of his own universe of art).

It was by touching up and transforming old materials with consummate art that Kalidasa, like Shakespeare, achieved his highest dramatic effects. Mr. Ryder thinks that Kalidasa has ruined a splendid tragic story. This again is due to the occidental passion for violent effects. Mr. Ryder is also wrong in thinking that the original story was tragic at all. By introducing Queen Ausinari he brought into the play an element of staid sober-tinted human love as a foil to the divine

romance that took the heart of Pururavas by storm. The introduction of the story about Urvasi uttering the name Pururavas instead of Purushottama during the staging of a play in heaven and about the curse of Bharata and the favour shown by Indra facilitates the development of the *motif* of the drama. Indra's first direction was that Urvasi should return to heaven as soon as the king saw his son by her. This story gives an air of greater naturalness and loveliness to the story than the story about the rams and the king in undress. It also shows by an unsaid and subtle suggestiveness that love's young dream finds its consummation as well as the close of its dawned and youthful flush when a child comes to link the lovers with the world and with life behind and beyond and the generations each with each. At the same time the final decree of Indra enabled Pururavas to retain the society of his beloved and gave his love a new plenitude and amplitude of bliss. There are many points common to this play and to Sakuntala. In both the heroes belong to the lunar race; the heroines in both have a divine element in them; in both the hero and the heroine love at

first sight; we see also a sage's curse and a ring episode and in both we see heroic offspring brought up in a hermitage and restored to the throne. Mr. E. B. Cowell says well in his introduction to his translation of the play. "*Vikramorvasiya* is a drama by the same elegant hand that wrote *Sakuntala* — tradition and internal evidence alike bearing witness to the identity of authorship. In each we see the same exquisite polish of style, the same light touch in painting scenery and character, and yet the dramas are "like in difference," and each has the separate personality, as well as the mutual likeness, which characterise the twin offspring of the same creating mind." The story as developed in the play runs as follows:— King Pururavas, when returning to the earth from the solar orb where he had gone to make obeisance to the Sun-God, rescued Urvasi and her companion Chitralekha from the demon Kesi and restored them to the other celestial nymphs (Apsaras). Pururavas and Urvasi fell deeply in love with each other. Queen Ausinari suspected and later discovered this fact and upbraided the king in a violent way. During the performance of a drama entitled the

marriage of Lakshmi written by Sarasvati and exhibited on the stage by the sage Bharata, Urvasi who personated Lakshmi when asked whom she loved replied "Pururavas" instead of 'Purushottama'. Thereupon the sage cursed her to fall from heaven to the earth. Indra however modified the curse and directed her to live with Pururavas till he saw his son by her. The Queen Ausinari worshipped God Chandra (the moon) and sought the king's favour and gave her consent to his marrying Urvasi. Urvasi, who, herself unseen, saw this scene, revealed herself and requited the king's passionate love. After some time she unwittingly entered a grove sacred to God Subramania in the Gandhamadana hill and was transformed into a creeper. The king maddened by her loss goes through the forest hither and thither asking all objects, animate and inanimate, there to give him tidings of his beloved. This occurs in the fourth Act and is one of the many occasions wherein Kalidasa exhibits the supremacy of his art. It contains matchless music and poetry. The king's wild rambling fancies and broken utterances excite our compassion. The king

gets a jewel called *Sangamaniya*, and with that jewel in his hand he embraces a creeper to which he feels irresistibly attracted. At once the creeper becomes Urvasi and he is reunited to her. Both then return to the capital and live in joy. One day a vulture carries away the jewel but falls pierced by an arrow. The arrow is brought to the king who finds in it the inscription Ayus, son of Pururavas. Immediately afterwards a female ascetic with whom Urvasi had left the boy brings the boy to the king's audience-hall. The king is overjoyed but his joy is turned to grief when he learns that the coming of his beloved son means the going of his beloved queen. At that moment Narada comes from Indra with the news that Indra has decreed that Urvasi is to live with the king all through life. The king becomes overjoyed and instals the prince as the *Yuvaraja* (heir-apparent). The play thus closes amidst general rejoicing.

Professor H. H. Wilson has remarked about the play: "Both persons and events are subject to an awful control, whose interference invests them with a dignity superior to their natural level. Fate is the ruling principle of

the narrative; and the monarch and the nymph, and the sovereign of the gods himself, are portrayed as subject to the inscrutable and inevitable decrees of destiny". It is not fate, in the sense of a blind self-active power, that is the presiding deity of life, according to the Hindu view of life. It is rather to the Grace of God acting according to Law and dispensing the appropriate fruit of *Karma* which itself is a resultant of action and desire. It was the jewel which came from the lotus feet of Goddess Parvati which effected the reunion of the separated and disconsolate lovers. I shall discuss Indian dramatic ideals and methods and motifs elsewhere in this work. Prof. Wilson says well further: "The chief charm of this piece is its poetry. The story, the situations, the characters, are all highly imaginative and nothing can surpass the beauty and justice of many of the thoughts."

In the play as well as elsewhere in his works the chief inspiration has always come to Kalidasa from Valmiki who was not only the *Adikavi* (the oldest poet) but was also *par excellence* the poet's poet. The main *motif* of the matchless fourth Act of the play was taken



from Valmiki's description of Rama's wandering in the forest after his separation from Sita. Kalidasa who was a consummate dramatist knew well how to select the most telling incidents and ideas and combine them into a dramatic whole. He knew that a dramatic situation implies intensity and concentration. The result is a play of great charm which combines both dramatic power and literary beauty.

*Vrkramorvasiya* was evidently midway between *Malavikagnimitra* and *Sakuntala* in point of time—nay, in point of skill and perfection as well. There is evidently some artistic design and fore-thought in his selecting two great kings of the lunar race (*Chandra Vamsa*) as the heroes of his two greatest plays. He had already devoted a great epic poem to the kings of the solar race and had meant that poem to be a warning forefinger to India. More about this later on. In these plays he glorified India's kings of the lunar race and sought to inspire India with a vision of her birth and her mission as a self-unified ruler of the earth (*Chaturanta Mahishapatni*, to use a great phrase which occurs in *Sakuntala*). There

is also a significance in the meeting of the human and the diviner elements of life in the love *Motif* in the two plays. In *Vikramorvasiya* the heroine is a denizen of the world of Gods. The heroine in *Sakuntala* is more humanised and is described as the child of transcendental austerity and transcendental beauty and charm. In both plays chivalry is the feeder of love, though the interlinking of souls by youth and loveliness by the process of elective affinity is the origin of love. In both the plays we find introduced and described at the end a noble boy who is at once a fulfilment and a promise. In both the plays we find the characteristic and peculiar Indian idea of the interplay of the human and the superhuman elements. But in this play we do not find the same perfection of skill in dramatic construction as in *Sakuntala*. Kalidasa had greater freedom of characterisation of a perfect woman in *Sakuntala* than in this play, because there he had to describe a young and innocent and high-souled forest-maiden whereat here the heroine is an elderly (though ever-youthful) experienced demi-goddess who was carried away by a tempestuous passion for a mortal lover. Further, in

the delineation of Dushyanta the poet has revealed also other royal and noble loveable traits of character *viz.*, his love of his people, his sympathy, his mercy, and his high and innate mental purity and moral rectitude. Professor Wilson says:—"The subject of each is taken from heroic mythology, and a royal demigod and a nymph of more than human mould are the hero and the heroine of either; there is the same vivacity of description and tenderness of feeling in both, the like delicate beauty in the thoughts and extreme elegance in the style. It may be difficult to decide to which the palm belongs but the story of the present play is perhaps more skilfully woven and the events rise out of each other more naturally than in *Sakuntala*, while, on the other hand, there is no one personage in it so interesting as the heroine of that drama."

Out of the characters in the play, the chief figures are of course *Pururavas* and *Urvashi*. Mr. Ryder calls him "a mere conventional hero." But this is due to a mere prejudice. In the play *Pururavas* is frequently called a *Rajarishi* (royal sage). He is chivalrous and fearless and noble in soul and is honoured by his people

as well as by Indra in heaven. He has also the loveable virtue of humility and attributes his victory to the grace of Indra. (Act I Verses 6 & 17). Chitraratha says well about him (and impliedly about heroism generally) :

अनुत्सेकः खलु विक्रमालंकारः ।

His tender solicitude (*Dakshinya*) in regard to Queen Ausinari in spite of his infatuation for Urvasi is another attractive trait. He says in Act II :

उर्वशीगतमनसोऽपि मम देव्यां स एव बहुमानः ॥

His instinctive love for his son is also admirably delineated in the play (see Act V Verses 9 and 10). But the chief trait of the hero which is described and developed in the play - like that of *Romeo* in *Romeo and Juliet* - is his poetic soul which is remarkably sensitive to beauty and to love which are the Moon and the Sun of the sky of a poet's soul. He says that the Moon God or the God of love alone could have created such peerless beauty as that of Urvasi (Act I Verse 10). Even in his madness the flashes of his poetic mind play lightning on the dark cloud of his grief caused by his separation from his beloved. On regaining her he exclaims

that his physical and his spiritual being have been thrilled by reunion.

त्वदर्शनेन प्रसन्नो मे सबाह्यान्तरात्मा ।

His appreciation of the beauty of nature is equally acute. He describes the beauty of Spring as shining like the beauty of a woman at the junction point of girlhood and womanhood (Act II Verse 7). He describes the Moon as going into the conjunction with the Sun for enabling the performance of pious rites of sacrifice on the holy occasion, as the giver of nectar to the Gods, as the illuminer of eyes failing in darkness, and as the crest-gem of God Siva. (Act III Verse 7). He has not the self-restraint and composure of Dushyanta but his loss of balance is due to his excessive love and excites our sympathy.

Of the other male characters we need mention only prince Ayus, who is full of heroism and who has an instinctive filial affection and reverence for the king and the Vidushaka who occupies a less prominent position in this play and in Sakuntala than in Malavikagnimitra but who is full of humour and witty criticism of life. The Vidushaka is

described as bursting with the royal secret. He describes heaven as being an uninteresting place as there is nothing to eat or drink there and as beings live there like fish with unwinking eyes. He has a keen love of natural beauty and describes the moonrise thus :—

प्रत्यासन्नेन चन्द्रोदयेन भवितव्यम् । यथा तिमिरेणा-  
तिरिच्यमानं पूर्वदिशामुखमालोहितप्रभं दृश्यते ॥

Of the female characters we may dismiss with a few words Queen Ausinari and Chitralekha. The Queen is at first angry with the king on account of his love for Urvasi. But very soon she repents and seeks to win his forgiveness and gives him leave to seek his heart's desire because she finds her truest happiness in and through his happiness. Even Urvasi praises her magnanimity of soul and says that she is as noble in soul as Indra's Queen.

स्थाने इयमपि देवी शब्देनोच्चार्यते । न हि किमपि  
परिहीयते शचीत ओजस्वितया ॥

Chitralekha calls her Mahanubhava (one of true nobility of soul). The king in spite of his overmastering passion for Urvasi has a true and

tender affection for his queen. Urvasi says of him that he is a *Priyakalatra*. I do not agree with the view that he was insincere in his profession of love for Queen Ausinari. Urvasi's high regard for her is apparent from her asking Prince Ayus to bow to her and get her blessing. She tells him that the Queen is his *Jyestha Mata* (elder mother).

Chitralekha is admirably described throughout the play. She is like *Vakulavalika* in *Malavikagnimitra* and *Priyamvada* in *Sakuntala*. She has wit and scintillating speech and is deeply attached to her friend. When asked by the king where Urvasi was, she replies:—“The lightning is seen only after the cloud is seen first.” When Urvasi says that her necklace was caught by a creeper and asks her to release it, she, knowing that it was a ruse to steal another look at the king replies:—“You are inextricably caught. I cannot release you.” She knows all secret and valuable vidyas (sciences) and says:— सखि हृदयमेतत्सर्वं विजानाति ।

The dominating figure is of course Urvasi. Ryder says:—“Urvasi is too much of a nymph to be a woman, and too much of a woman to be

a nymph." This is of course very antithetical and clever but it is not true. Urvasi is the incarnate spirit of beauty and love and youth and delight. She is the soul of the soul, the *Epipschydion*. She can be best described in Shelley's words, because Kalidasa is at once the Shelly and the Shakespeare of India.

"Art thou not void of guile,  
 A lovely soul formed to be blest and bless?  
 A well of sealed and secret happiness,  
 Whose waters like blithe light and music are  
 Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? A star  
 Which moves not in the moving Heavens  
alone?  
 A smile amid dark frowns? A gentle tone  
 Amid rude voices? A beloved light?  
 A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight?  
 A Lute which those who love has taught to  
play  
 Make music on, to soothe the roughest day  
 And lull fond grief asleep? A buried treasure?  
 A cradle of young thoughts of wingless  
pleasure?"

In the case of an ordinary human heroine the poet could describe lovely and loveable human characteristics and feelings but this



could not be done in the case of an *Apsaras*. But he could describe in regard to the latter splendour of form, divine thrills of bliss, and actions in heaven and mid-air and earth. She is of the upper regions—a being of buoyancy and brightness and bliss. Urvashi knows no awe but love. She says: मदनः खलु मां नियोजयति । This links the immortal to the mortal and humanises her divinity. She even parts with her child to ensure her stay with the king. Her love for her *Apsaras* friends is another lovely human trait in her. She is of immortal youth and loveliness. The king calls her सुरसुन्दरी (the lovely one among the divine beings) and स्थिरयौवन (the lady of the eternal youth). I cannot do better than quote here two wonderful stanzas and set them side by side with Tagore's wonderful poem on Urvashi. The king tells Urvashi to take him home on a new rain-cloud as an aerial car, having the flashing lightnings as its standard and decorated with the rainbow as a lovely painting.

अचिरप्रभाविलसितैः पताकिना

सुरकार्मुकाभिनवचित्रशोभिना ।

गमितेन खेलगमने विमानतां

नय मां नवेन वसतिं पयोमुचा ॥

Equally, nay even more, beautiful is the description of the dancing seas and the clouded skies. What a setting for a play about Urvasi !

पूर्वदिक्पवनाहतकलोलोद्गतबाहु-

र्मेघाङ्गैर्नृत्यति सललितं जलनिधिनाथः ।

हंसरथाङ्गशङ्खकुङ्कुमकृताभरणः

करिमकराकुलकृष्णकमलकृतावरणः ।

वेलासलिलोद्वेलितहस्तदत्ततालो-

ऽवस्तृणाति दश दिशो रुद्ध्वा नवमेघकालः ॥

(The sea with its cloud-hued limbs dances attractively with uplifted arms in the shape of billows raised by the eastern gales. His chiming anklets consist of Hamsa and Chakravaka birds and saffron-coloured conch-shells. He is wearing a garland of dark lotuses in the form of sea monsters. The waves dashing on the shore form the rythymical beating of time. The season of new rain-clouds envelops the universe everywhere).

Tagore's great poem runs as follows:—

“Like some stemless flower, blooming in thy self, when didst thou blossom Urvasi ?  
That primal spring, thou didst arise from the yeast of Ocean,

In thy right hand nectar, venom in thy left  
The swelling mighty Sea like serpent  
tamed with spells,  
Drooping his thousand towering hoods,  
Fall at thy feet!  
While as the Kunda blossom, a naked  
beauty adored by the Gods,  
Thou stainless One.

Wast thou never bud, never maiden of  
tender years,  
O eternally youthful Urvasi!  
Sitting alone, under whose dark roof,  
Didst thou know childhood's play toying  
with gems and pearls?  
At whose side, in some chamber lit with the  
flashing of gems,  
Lulled by the chant of the sea-waves, didst  
thou sleep on coral bed,  
A smile on the pure face?  
That moment when thou awakedst into the  
universe, thou wast framed of youth  
In full blown beauty?

From age to age thou hast been the world's  
beloved, O surpassed in loveliness,  
Urvasi!

Breaking their meditation, sages lay at thy  
feet the fruits of their penance ;  
Smitten with thy glance, the three worlds  
grown restless with youth ;  
The blinded winds blow thine intoxicating  
fragrance around ;  
Like the black bee honey-drunken, the  
infatuated poet wanders with greedy  
heart,  
Lifting chants of wild Jubilation !  
While thou.....thou goest with jingling  
anklets and waving skirts,  
Restless as lightning !

In the assembly of Gods, when thou dancest  
in ecstasy of Joy,  
O Swaying Wave, Urvasi !  
The company of billows in mid-ocean swell  
and dance, beat on beat ;  
In the crests of the corn the skirts of Earth  
tremble ;  
From thy necklace stars fall off in the sky ;  
Suddenly in the breast of man the heart  
forgets itself,  
The blood dances !  
Suddenly in the horizon thy zone bursts as  
under ;  
Ah, Wild in abandonment !

She will not return, she will not return!

That Moon of Glory has set

She has made her home on the mountain of  
setting, Lass Urvasi!

Therefore today, on earth, with the joyous  
breath of Spring

Mingles the lang-drawn sigh of some eternal  
separation,

On the night of Full Moon, when the world  
brims with laughter,

Memory, from somewhere far away, pipes a  
flute that brings unrest,

The tears gush out!

Yet in that weeping of the spirit Hope  
awakes and lives,

Ah, Unfettered One!"

Mr. A. B. Keith says with a singular lack of taste about Urvasi: "Her magic power to watch her lover unseen and to overhear his conversation is as unnatural as the singular lack of maternal affection which induces her to abandon forthwith her child rather than lose her husband; her love is selfish; she forgets her duty and respect to the Gods in her dramatic act, and her transformation is the direct outcome of a fit of insane jealousy."

This critique altogether misses the point of Kalidasa's conception and characterisation of Urvasi. The poet describes a denizen of the world of gods, a being who is quintessential beauty and is dominated by quintessential love. She has magic powers which heighten the effect of the scene when she overhears the king's declaration of love of herself while she herself is unseen. Her excessive love for her husband which would become fruitless if her husband saw their child let to her placing her child in charge of her friend. We may well take it that she met her child often and watched with love his growth and his upbringing. The other alleged defects are all phases of her excessive and passionate love, and we can never understand her character unless we remember the elemental passion of her nature.

Equally ineffectual and unacceptable is Mr. Keith's remarks about the *denouement*. "The minor characters are handled with comparative lack of success; the incident of the boy Ayus is forced and the ending of the drama ineffective and flat". On the other hand it seems to me that the tempestuous passion of the human king towards the celestial damsel

takes on a human aspect and comes nearer to our minds and hearts in the fifth Act. Passion is linked to the graces and sanctities of domestic and national life, and the benedictions of Indra and Narada introduce the element of divine approval which alone makes passion a purifying and uplifting force. Only then does passion which is born of mere love of beauty become a life-giving force (the name of the child Ayus hints this well). Only then does the human king Pururavas attain true godlikeness by the unselfish and tranquil bliss of his affection into which passion has become sublimated and transmuted and transfigured, and only then a gracious humanness descends on the divine Urvashi.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### Sakuntala.

**T**HIS is the greatest of Kalidasa's plays. It was about it that Goethe uttered the ever-memorable poem of appreciation :

“Would'st thou the young year's blossoms  
and the fruits of its decline,  
And all by which the soul is charmed,  
enraptured, fed ?

Would'st thou the earth and heaven itself  
in one sole name combine ?

I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at  
once is said.”

This single stanza describes what one-world-poet felt about another and sums up admirably the real glories of the play. Sir Monier-Williams says:—“No composition of Kalidasa displays more richness of his poetical genius, exuberance of his imagination, the warmth and play of his fancy, his profound



knowledge of the human heart, his delicate appreciation of its most refined and tender emotions, his familiarity with the workings and counter-workings of its conflicting feelings,—in short more entitles him to rank as the Shakespeare of India.” Alexander Von Humboldt says:—“Kalidasa, the celebrated author of the *Sakuntala*, is a masterly describer of the influences which Nature exercises upon the minds of lovers. Tenderness in the expression of feeling, and richness of creative fancy, have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations.” The drama of *Sakuntala* has always been regarded as one of the greatest glories of the world. It has been selected by competent authorities as one of the world’s one hundred best books. In India it has been always admired as the most beautiful revelation of dramatic genius. In literature there must be three elements present if it is to be a noble thing of beauty and of joy. If true work of art must have individuality and must be revelatory of personality it must be full of racial colour and temperament; and it must realise and reveal the universal elements in life. Judged in the light of this great truth of

art *Sakuntala* reveals the delicate fancy and chaste and creative imagination of the poet; it is Indian to the core; (and it presents those universal elements of love and grief in separation and joy in reunion which are of the very stuff of human life.

The Indian literature is full of sanity, serenity, romantic idealism and spiritual vision. The Indian drama mirrors life in its fulness. It is romantic and not classical in its aim and appeal and achievement. It presents life in all its variety—full of shadow and of sunshine, of storm, and of peace. It has a glorious and gorgeous setting amidst the sweetest splendours and symphonies of Nature. These traits are more abundantly present in *Sakuntala* than in any other drama in the East or in the West. In it there is the further inner and heavenly beauty of the soul which is invincible in its innocence and purity and devotion.

If we compare the story of *Sakuntala* in the *Adi parva* of the *Mahabharata* with the story as handled and expressed in the great play of *Kalidasa*, we see at once how, like Shakespeare, he filled the rifts in the ore with pure gold.

The story occurs in Padma Purana also. But in it we find the same version as in Kalidasa's play. In the Mahabharata story the king meets Sakuntala in person and she narrates the story of her birth to him. The king proposes marriage to her and she consents but stipulates that their son should rule the kingdom after him. He agrees to it and marries her in the *Gandharva* form. A son is born to her and grows up in the hermitage. The sage Kanva then sends her and her son to the king. The king recognises her but disowns her in open durbar. She departs in anger. Then an aerial voice announces her truth and her purity. The king then brings her back and tells her that he disowned her lest his subjects should suspect the truth of the marriage and the legitimacy of their son and awaited the declaration of her truth and purity by a divine voice. He finally accepts her and instals her son Bharata as the *Yuvaraja* (the heir-apparent to the throne).

This story has got the advantage of directness but ethical and æsthetic refinement tells us that Kalidasa's handling of the story not only shows the pen of a great dramatist having a keen eye to effective dramatic situations

but shows also a wonderful sense of poetic justice and æsthetic fitness. He has successfully lifted Dushyanta into the rank of a great Nayaka (hero) has furnished a new key to the story, has given Sakuntala a new and radiant setting and enhanced her glory outdistancing even that of Miranda, has probed the depths of the ambrosia ocean of love, and has given us the heavenly treasure of new and rich inner experiences.

In the very first act, the flower garden scene, by introducing Sakuntala in the midst of her two bosom-friends, Kalidasa gives the natural and human setting enhancing the beauty of her frame and soul which was to entrance and enrapture the pleasure-satiated imperial nature of king Dushyanta. The curse of the sage Durvasa and the episode of the ring free the king's name from all stain and enable the poet to describe the pathetic scenes of separation, remorse and reunion. At the same time they introduce that psychological link by which the present is linked to the past, by which effect is linked to cause, and by which human life is linked to the life divine. Mr. Ryder says well that this device is "a divine cloud that

envelops the drama, in no way obscuring human passion, but rather giving to human passions an unwonted largeness and universality". Equally masterly as a stroke of genius is the device of the sending of Sakuntala to the king before her child is born. This is in harmony with the delicacy and the idealisation characteristic of Kalidasa's dramatic treatment of the plot. (Equally remarkable is the scene of the taking of Sakuntala by Menaka to heaven. If the poet had sent Sakuntala back to Kanva's *asrama*, he could not have impressed us with a sense of the pathos of the situation and of the purgation of Sakuntala's soul through suffering so that her too ready amorousness might be expiated and her love might grow in sweetness and strength while preserving its softness. Her loss of her old home and her old father and her old friends and companions including her beloved creeper *Vanajyotsna* and her still more beloved fawn make her grief all the more full of desolation. The heavenly harmony of the first four Acts has been stilled by the tempest of strident sorrow. What but a mother-heart can soothe her? What but heaven can recompense for the pains of earth? We can no more restore her to

Kanva's *Asrama* than restore a plucked flower to the stem whereon it grew. The flower of her nature grew in calmness and sweetness and purity, unfading like the unfading flowers of heaven, till the purified king reattained the dower of her heavenlier love. The initial reference in the play to Kanva's going to Somatirtha (which prepares our mind for the coming curse), the narration of the story of Sakuntala's birth by Anasuya instead of by herself the story about the watering of the trees, the delicate description of Sakuntala's love in all its fortunes, the aerial flight to Indra's heaven, the story as to Bharata's amulet, the relinking of the king and Sakuntala through the boy Bharata, and the blessings of the sage Maricha add the crowning touches of sweetness and loveliness to the beautiful story.)

Thus Kalidasa's divine magic of poesy has justified the king, (lifted Sakuntala to the height of such divine figures as Sita and Savitri and Damayanti,) elevated love from the physical plane to the plane of the soul, and introduced those elements of life and glow and variety without which a drama would be but a narrative through the medium of dialogue—

something like one of Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*.

In the play the story runs as follows:— One day king Dushyanta went a hunting. When he was about to kill some fawns in a forest, he heard the voice of some hermits praying him not to do so. He accordingly withdrew his arrow. At their request he went into the hermitage of the sage Kanva there to receive hospitality. There he saw along with her friends Anasuya and Priyamvada the divinely beautiful *Sakuntala* who was the child of Visvamitra and Menaka but had been abandoned in the forest and was brought up by the sage Kanva. He and Sakuntala fell deeply in love with each other. He learnt from her friends the story of her birth.

The sages in the forest requested him to stay for some time there and protect them. But at the same time his mother sent word to him to return to the capital as she had to celebrate a vow. He then sent his companion Madhavya, the vidushaka (jester), to the capital to represent him as his mother had brought up both of them like brothers. He stayed behind in the hermitage as the hermits had sought his

protection and as he could not tear himself away from Sakuntala's presence.

When some time later he went into the forest to find some relief from the grief of his love-torn state he saw Sakuntala lying down fanned by her friends. At their persuasion she told them, with bashful unwillingness, about her love. They persuaded her to write a love-letter in a lotus leaf. The king then revealed himself and his passion and promised to her friends that he would marry her according to the Gandharva form of marriage and make her his supreme queen. Thus the two passionate lovers became husband and wife. The king then departed to his capital giving Sakuntala his royal signet-ring and saying that he would, within as many days as the number of letters of his name in the ring, send his state officials to bring her to his capital in state with the pomp and ceremony due to a queen. The love scene in the third Act is four times as large in the Kashmir and Bengali recensions as it is in the South Indian text.

Then followed the curse of Durvasas which shattered in a moment this fair palace of love. He came to Kanva's hermitage, and finding



himself neglected by Sakuntala who was then in a mood of abstraction lost in her thoughts of her absent lord, cursed her saying that as she forgot him her lord would forget her. Her friends who were absent culling flowers heard his strident words. Priyamvada ran up to him and fell at his feet and prayed for forgiveness. He relented and said that the king would remember if Sakuntala should show some memorial ornament (Abhijnana abharana) to him. Priyamvada felt consoled as Sakuntala had the royal signet-ring given to her by the king.

Meantime the sage Kanva returned from his pilgrimage and was glad to learn from a heavenly voice about Sakuntala's wedding. Though he loved her dearly he resolved to send her to her lord's mansion and directed two of his disciples, Sarngarava and Saradvata, to take her there. The forest deities gave beautiful jewels and raiments to deck her like the day. The sage Kanva gave her wholesome and righteous words of counsel to guide her in her new exalted sphere of life. She went round the holy altar and took leave of all including her beloved friends and fawn and creeper and

her revered and beloved father and went with her guides to the palace of the king.

But the curse of Durvasas had clouded the king's memory. Sakuntala lost the ring when she bathed at Sachiteertham on her way to the palace. At the interview the king disowned her as he was a righteous king and could not accept as wife a married woman whom he could not recall to his mind as wedded by him. Her guides told her that they could not take her back to the pure hermitage as her place was in her husband's home whether he would accept her or not. Denied by both she cried out for refuge, and Menaka bore her aloft to heaven.

In the meantime a fisherman found the ring in the stomach of a fish caught by him. The king's police officials caught him and took the ring to the king. This scene is full of broad farce and rollicking humour. At once the king's memory became clear and free from the cloud of the curse. He upbraided himself for his heartless cruelty to his beloved and was distracted with grief. He spent all his time in hopeless love of her and in painting her form and talking about her beauty and her virtue. Sanumati, a heavenly nymph, had

been requested by Menaka to know the state of the king's mind in regard to Sakuntala. She bore the happy news to heaven.

Meantime Indra had sent his charioteer Matali to bring the king to aid him against demons. To make the king shake off his lethargy, Matali seized Madhavya and threatened to kill him. Stung to action the king seized his bow to kill Matali with an arrow. Matali then revealed himself and his purpose. He said "A lighted faggot if it is shaken begins to blaze; and a serpent if angered lifts its crested hood to strike. Even so an affront restores to a man his potency of soul". He then took him to heaven where victorious arms routed the demons. When returning after accepting the honour shown to him by Indra, they descended on the Hemakuta mountain. There the king met Bharata, his child by Sakuntala and was reunited to his beloved and both accepted with joy the blessings of the holy sage Maricha and returned to their land and lived in happiness.

As I am describing elsewhere Kalidasa's skill as a dramatist and other aspects of his poetic greatness, I shall not go into these

features in this chapter. I may however point out that this drama, more than the other two plays, shows his greatest powers at their very zenith. Not only do we find therein his characteristic excellences—his naturalness and simplicity of expression, his golden felicity of style, his heavenly melody of verse, his love of nature at her loveliest, his creative imagination, his wonderful power of delineating sentiment and character, and his intimate knowledge of the human heart, we find therein some other great and wonderful features as well. One of these is admirably brought out by Rabindranath Tagore. He says: "This ancient poet of India refuses to acknowledge passion as the supreme glory of love; he proclaims goodness as the final goal of love". He says further in his essay on *Sakuntala*, *Its inner meaning*:—"In Goethe's words *Sakuntala* blends together the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its maturity; it combines heaven and earth in one.....Goethe says expressly that *Sakuntala* contains the history of a development--the development of flower into fruit, of earth into heaven, of matter into spirit". He says that *Sakuntala* elevates





“love from the sphere of moral beauty.” He says again: “With matchless art Kalidasa has placed his heroine at the meeting point of action and calmness, of Nature and law, of river and ocean, as it were..... In this drama Kalidasa has extinguished the volcanic fire of tumultuous passion by means of the tears of the penitent heart. Truly in *Sakuntala* there is one Paradise Lost and another Paradise Regained”. He says further: “In her earlier forest home Sakuntala had her awakenment of life in the restlessness of her youth. In the later hermitage she attained the fulfilment of her life”.

*Sakuntala* is one of the highest peaks of Indian racial achievement not only because it has given a perfect form and expression to the Indian ideal of love. It has given an equally perfect form to the Indian ideals of social and political life as well. It depicts a state of society where the elements of society act in unison and concert. The individual is shown in right relation to the family; the family is shown in right relation to the states and the social life is shown in right relation to the super-social life. The supremacy of the ethical life is asserted

and vindicated throughout the play. Further, as I shall show later on, Kalidasa hints at the suzerainty of a united India when the forces of renunciation and righteous enjoyment are well-balanced and combined, when the capital and the forest know to respect and benefit by each other, and when a great incarnation of the racial life conceived in a hermitage and born in heaven and trained by a sage is vouchsafed to the land.

(The play has given a perfect expression to the passion of India for the life divine.) There is not a single trace of religious narrowness or bigotry or sectarianism in the play. But we find in it asceticism in a mood of sympathy to life; we find sages who could feel for the world; and we find a consciousness of the guidance of the destinies of men by a God of love. Further, we find descriptions of the Almighty in terms which are noble and uplifting and free from all taint of sectarian narrowness. The play begins in the peace of one hermitage and ends in the peace of another hermitage. It is the voice of resurgent and renascent and triumphant and united and synthetic. Hinduism as a world-religion. We find in it the authentic expression



of the great Indian ideal of *Santi* (peace and love) protected by righteous power.

I now proceed to deal with the characters in the play. Dushyanta was a Dharmic (righteous) soul. In him Kalidasa symbolises the highest qualities of Aryan manhood. When in spite of his love of the chase he hears the voice of the sages to desist from the hunt, he at once obeys the voice of Dharma (righteousness). He accepts the dictum that a king's power should be used only to help the distressed and never to punish the innocent. When he learns that he has come to Kanva's hermitage, he yearns to heed the call of Dharma and bow to the sage and get his blessings and to make himself pure by entering the hermitage which is a home of holiness. He says

पुण्याश्रमदर्शनेन तावदात्मानं पुनीमहे ।

He leaves his followers behind and goes on foot into the hermitage lest they should disturb the peace and sanctity of the forest retreat. He enters in plain robes leaving aside the pomp and splendour of royal pageantry. When he sees Sakuntala, his conscience pure and trained in Dharma or righteousness, whispers to him

that she is born in a line which is fit to blend with his royal line. He says:

असंशयं क्षत्रपरिग्रहक्षमा यदार्यमस्यामभिलाषि मे मनः ।

सतां हि सन्देहपदेषु वस्तुषु प्रमाणमन्तःकरणप्रवृत्तयः ॥

He is the very soul of righteousness and truth and honour. When he hears the call of the sages for protection and the call of his mother to attend a domestic ceremony, he unhesitatingly obeys the call of public Dharma (duty). His love-making to Sakuntala has got the noble reticences and delicacies of a pure soul. Later on when the sages sent by Kanva take Sakuntala to him he sends his preceptor to receive them and he receives them in the Agni-griha. In the last Act when he learns that he was in the holy sage Maricha's hermitage, he resolves to receive his blessings and accepts his benediction with becoming reverence.

I have stressed first Kalidasa's delineation of Dushyanta as the ideal man because this gives the key to his portrayal of Dushyanta as an ideal man of culture, as an ideal lover, and as an ideal ruler. Thus Dushyanta's dominant trait as an ideal man is his Dharmic (righteous) nature. He is the very soul of honour.

His dignity and self-restraint and self-control are equally remarkable traits of his character. As Syala says in the play he is a प्रकृतिगम्भीर (i e. having innate dignity of soul). He preserves his self-command and dignity of bearing in the face of Sarngarava's taunts. Only on one occasion viz, when he sees the ring and remembers Sakuntala and his ill-treatment of her, his self-control vanishes before the onset of a paroxysm of grief. He has a rare gift of the power of self-examination. He says in Act VI verse 26:—  
 “I am not able to know my own feelings day after day. How can I know by what way each of my subjects goes?” His humility is remarkable. After conquering the Asuras by his prowess, he attributes his success to Indra's race. He says:—

“मातले, अनुष्ठितनिदेशोऽपि मघवतः सत्क्रिया-  
 विशेषादनुपयुक्तमिवात्मानं समर्थये”

(Though I have carried out Indra's orders, yet the exalted honour shown by him makes me feel that I have not rendered any meritorious service”). He also says:—

सिध्यन्ति कर्मसु महत्स्वपि यन्नियोज्याः

संभावनागुणमवेहि तमीश्वराणाम् ।

(If servants succeed in great undertakings, know that that is due to their masters' gracious regard for them).

He has further a vivid realisation of the divinity that shapes our ends and says :—

“अथवा भवितव्यानां द्वाराणि भवन्ति सर्वत्र ।

(The outlets of decreed events will open themselves out everywhere). His chivalry and courtesy are equally noteworthy. He could not brook to see Sakuntala doing menial work and undertakes to water the trees on her behalf. He says about her and her friends that they are of equal youth and loveliness, though Sakuntala is peerless among women.

अहो समवयोरूपरमणीयं भवतीनां सौहार्दम् ।

His sympathy extends even to the dumb creation. He asks his servant to attend to the horses by bathing them during the interval of his visit to the hermitage. In the hermitage he tenderly gives water to a fawn and Sakuntala recalls it to his mind with fond recollection. He is besides an ideal man in his personal graces.

मधुरगम्भीराकृतिः । प्रियदर्शनो देवः । अहो दीप्तिमतोऽपि विश्वसनीयतास्य वपुषः । प्रकृतिगम्भीरः ।

He is always active and is a master of weapons of war and he is strong though slender and handsome in physical build.

रत्रिकिरणसहिष्णु क्लेशलेखैरभिन्नं

गिरिचर इव नागः प्राणसारं बिभर्ति ।

Aditi says about him:

संभावनीयानुभावा अस्य आकृतिः ।

Though he is attached to hunting yet he is not excessively and inordinately fond of it. He can at any moment turn away from it to art, to pleasure or to the higher cares of the state. In short, righteousness, self-control, dignity, chivalry, and heroism are the great traits of his character. It has been well said: "Dushyanta with his royal dignity, his heroic strength, his boundless benevolence, his never-failing courtsey, his rigid self-restraint, his impartiality, and his affectionate disposition is one of the sublimest visions that ever appeared before the eye of fancy, and the portrait presented to us by the great Indian dramatist is surpassingly grand and sublime." He is also rightly proud of his noble and exalted lineage.

कः पौरवे etc., I, 21 ; वयस्व, न परिहार्ये वस्तुनि  
पौरवाणां मनः प्रवर्तते etc.

He is thus an ideal man in every respect.

If such is the beautiful picture of Dushyanta as an ideal man, even more attractive is Kalidasa's picture of Dushyanta as an ideal man of culture. Mr. Ryder says that there is in him "a shade too much of the meditative to suit our ideal of more alert and ready manhood." But it is the combination of meditation and action, of vigour and graciousness that form our ideal of manhood which is not less alert and ready than other ideals of manhood but is more humane and divine than them. The king's keen observation of nature is noteworthy. True culture is equally at home in the realm of nature as in the realm of art. His description of the deer and the horse show his minute observation of animal life. His description of the hermitage and its beauties and its peculiar features shows equally his keen and attentive and observant eye. He is unsophisticated by town life or sovereignty and is able to realise the superiority of true loveliness in sylvan scenes and without artificial aids to loveliness. His keen sense of the beautiful and the sublime is another chief glory of a man of true culture. In ordinary natures habit and familiarity wear

away the edge of perception and the zest in life. He says :

“किमिव हि मधुराणां मण्डनं नाकृतीनाम्”

(What does not set off the beauty of true loveliness of form?). It is from his mouth that we hear those wonderful stanzas Act I verse 20 and Act V verse 21 which I regard as the *sutras* of the entire world's literature on *Æsthetics* and which I shall discuss later on in this work. He is a keen lover of the fine arts. He loves and appreciates beautiful music and says about Hamsapadika's song:—  
अहो परिवाहिनी गीतिः । Though he is an expert in the art of line and colour, yet his soul so keenly alive to beauty could and did forbid all art and all joy in life when he realised that he had lost the queen of his soul. Act VI verse 5 says:—रम्यं द्रष्टुं (he is averse to beautiful things). I regard this as the highest sign of true culture. The king's conversation has throughout the play that combination of self-restrained yet quivering imaginativeness and felicity of phrase and idea which can be attained only by a soul truly vibrant and responsive to culture in its highest and noblest sense. चतुरं प्रियं चालपन्—

Act I. At the same time he could unbend and see the comic side of life and play like a child with Madavya.

Dushyanta is as much an ideal lover as he is an ideal man and ideal man of culture. The fact that he had other queens should not be laid at his door as a fault and as a defect. I have already referred to this matter in my two earlier chapters. He is tender to his queens but in regard to Sakuntala he feels himself transfigured into a new being altogether. He says that he has only two lights of his soul and his line i. e., the ocean-girdled earth and Sakuntala. His love for Sakuntala is not the mere animal passion of an Antony satiated with pleasure though poetic in soul. It does not wreck family and state. It is at once a fulfilment of individual life, family life, and racial life. He is pained that his lineage will be left without perpetuation. He knows the duties and sanctities of married life as well as its graces and its pleasures. One of the pleasing traits in him is his averseness to looking at the beauty of married women who are the wives of others. He says:—‘अनिर्घर्णनीयं परकलत्रम्’. Kalidasa expresses the same idea in a well-



known stanza in *Raghuvamsa* (XVI, 8). This delicacy and self-restraint are so remarkable that the Pratihari cries out:—

“अहो धम्मावेक्खिदा भट्टिणो । ईदिसं णाम सुहो-  
बणदं रूवं देक्खिअ को अण्णो विअरेदि ।”

(What a seeker of righteousness is the king! Who else would hesitate after seeing such a beautiful self-offered loveliness!). No wonder that the exaltation of righteous bliss caused by his reunion with Sakuntala was so great that the poet could not bear to give it an earthly setting but gave it a heavenly setting on the eternally beautiful and blissful Hemakuta hill which is a meeting place of earth and heaven.)

King Dushyanta is also an ideal ruler of men. He is indeed every inch a king. His portraiture by Kalidasa is higher and nobler than that of the English kings, even including Henry V, by Shakespeare. Throughout the play he is referred to as *Rajrishi* (saintly king). In the *Raghuvamsa* it is said that a kshatriya is so-called because he protects people from harm. In this play also this ideal of protection is stressed and emphasised.

“आर्तानां भयमपनेतुमात्तधन्वा”

In felicitous terms the poet says that the Puru kings are men of a holy vow, such vow being that of performing a sacred sacrifice *i. e.*, the protection of those in distress. The same ideal as that described in Tennyson's *Idylls of the king i. e.*, that of one "whose glory was redressing human wrong." Throughout the play this is the king's ruling passion. In the forest he helps the sages of the hermitage; in the capital he is daily in the hall of justice redressing wrongs; he rushes to the help of Madavya when he was seized by Matali; and he crowns his life-work by aiding the gods against the demons. Even during his prostration by grief he asks the ministers to send up to him their reports about the administration.

“नियमयसि विमर्गप्रस्थितानात्तदण्डः” etc

His grief made him feel more acutely and sympathetically the grief of the wide, wide world. When a merchant died without issue and the ministers reported that his properties might escheat to the crown, the king ordered the estate to be given to the posthumous child of the merchant after it was born. He had it proclaimed that whoever lost his loving relative would find the king acting the part of such rela-

tive for him, unless there was an element of sin according to law in doing so. Thus in this instance and in his rejection of the lovely Sakuntala he shows himself as a lover of righteousness (Dharma) and a despiser of unrighteous wealth and enjoyment. At the same time he enforces obedience to law and ethics on the part of all just as he obeys them all himself. Sarngarava says this very well in Act V verse 10.

“न कश्चिद्वर्णानामपथमपकृष्टोऽपि भजते ।”

Thus the entire kingdom was felt by Dushyanta to be his household (प्रजाः प्रजाः स्वा इव). He himself says that ordinary men attain happiness by effort whereas in the case of kings effort leads to greater effort. His personal attendants rightly declare about him that unmindful of personal pleasure he wearies himself on account of his people just as a tree bears the brunt of the solar heat but blesses with shade those who seek its help, and that the king controls the evil-minded and decides disputes and multiplies the protective and productive elements in life and that hence he is the true kinsman of all. The king has another noble trait. (He is very sensitive to public opinion.

On learning from Maricha the true cause of the cloud upon his clear memory, his first words are that he was glad to be free from public blame (एष वचनीयान्मुक्तोऽस्मि). The poet has given us another lofty idea about political life viz, that it should be in alliance with the highest elements of purity and austerity and piety in life and that only then it would deserve and attain prestige and power and overlordship over the whole world.

Next to Dushyanta we find a detailed delineation of the great sage Kanva. His love for his adopted child Sakuntala is one of the most pleasing traits of his nature. He is a Kulapati i. e., a sage who feeds and teaches ten thousand sages.

“मुनीनां दशसाहस्रं योऽन्नदानादिपोषणात् ।

अध्यापयति विप्रर्षिरसौ कुलपतिः स्मृतः ॥”

Yet such a great sage who was revered by gods and men and to whom celestial messages are declared by aerial voices and before whose mind all things are clearly unrolled as declared by the sage Maricha is full of fond and tender affection for Sakuntala. Even at the beginning of the play he is described as having gone

to Somatirtha to propitiate the Gods to avert an evil that was impending in regard to Sakuntala. It was his benediction that brought to Sakuntala the pure love of a pure-hearted king. He rejoiced to hear about her love and at once made preparations to send her to her lord, though it caused him many pangs to separate from his beloved foster-child. The fourth Act where we find this scene depicted is full of beauty and charm and has captivated millions of hearts during untold centuries. A well-known Sanskrit stanza says:—

कालिदासस्य सर्वस्वमभिज्ञानशकुन्तलम् ।

तत्रापि च चतुर्थोऽङ्को यत्र याति शकुन्तला ॥

Kanva's advice to Sakuntala is of a most sublime yet practical description. He tells her that though he is a forest-dweller he knows the world well.

वनौकसोऽपि सन्तो लोकज्ञा वयम् ।

His advice shows a most intimate knowledge of the human heart and of the duties and refinements of life. What a beautiful light is thrown on his nature by his asking Gautami if there was any other advice to be given to Sakuntala !

His pure love was bestowed not only on his child Sakuntala but embraced all creation. (The entire hermitage was his body and he was its soul.) Nay, his love embraced the whole of creation. Even fawns and creepers felt and shared his beneficent affection. Like Prospero in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, he stands outside the turmoil of life but is in touch with it by means of his wise sympathy. (But he is more divine and forgiving and serene than a hundred Prosperos.) (He does not curse Dushyanta for rejecting Sakuntala, because the whole panorama of life was clear to his vision.

तपःप्रभावात् प्रत्यक्षं सर्वमेव तत्रभवतः) Act VII.

He passes through the drama a blessed and blessing figure spreading sweetness and serenity everywhere. The same description applies also to the sage Maricha with whose blessing the play ends.

The disciples of Kanva *viz.*, Sarngarava and Saradvata are faintly but clearly drawn. Of the two, Sarngarava has a passion for the lonely and ascetic life and dislikes the crowded town and says that in a town he feels as one would feel if he were in a house on fire. The

poet has chosen his name well as it indicates "One having the sound of a bow." He is irascible and showers on the king hot and angry words when the latter rejects Sakuntala. Saradvata is more cool and collected. He pities the impure world which is fettered by pleasure and whose soul is asleep.

Madavya, the king's jester, is not so fully drawn as in *Malavikagnimitra* and is not so full of ingenuity and wit and humour. But he is a jolly soul and adds in a marked degree to the elements of gaiety in the play.

Last but not least among the male characters is the boy Bharata. His coming is prophesied throughout the play and when he comes he takes all hearts by storm and not only the heart of his distracted father. He is rightly called *Sarvadamana* as he subdues the hearts of all beings. He is a bright and bold and blessed child. Already the golden link of Sakuntala and Dushyanta, he is entitled by his birth and upbringing and by his qualities and by his destinies to relink them to each other after their trials and tribulations in life.

Among the female characters Gautami and Aditi are but faintly drawn. But the poet has

taken great pains to delineate fully the two friends and forest-playmates of Sakuntala. They are both lovely and lovable and playful but each has some special traits and excellences of her own. Anasuya excels in tranquillity and ethical feeling. Priyamvada excels in sportive charm and quick-witted sprightliness and gaiety and vivacity and attractive speech. Their very names suggest their special graces. Of the two, Anasuya is the more practical and Priyamvada is the more sentimental. Anasuya is the more diffident whereas Priyamvada is the more confident. They both love Sakuntala deeply and she loves them with an ardent and exceeding love. Probably she feels the fascinating charm of Priyamvada more than that of Anasuya, if it is permissible to imagine degrees in an infinite tenderness. When bidding her final farewells Priyamvada's name is the last on her lips and she refers to her as Priyamvadamisra. The dynamic charm of Priyamvada's nature and utterance comes out throughout the play. When Sakuntala says that Priyamvada had tied her bodice too tight, she asks her to blame not her but her crescent and rounding maidenhood. When Sakuntala



tells her friends that the Kesara tree beckons to her with wind-tremulous leaf-fingers. Priyamvada asks her to stay near the tree awhile as she was like a golden creeper. When Sakuntala looks fondly the *vanajyotsna* creeper and the mango tree, Priyamvada impishly tells her that she was pining for a lover. When after enquiring about Sakuntala's birth the king is in a state of mental suspense, it is Priyamvada who, despite Sakuntala's forbidding forefinger, induces him to ask his unspoken question as to whether Sakuntala was to be given in marriage. When Sakuntala starts to go away, it was she that detained her demanding the discharge of her debt *i.e.*, the watering of two trees. When she sees the royal signet ring she quickly and cleverly guesses that Dushyanta must be the king and says:—

हला शकुन्तले मोचितास्यनुकम्पिनार्येण अथवा महा-  
राजेन ।

Again it was she that observed that Dushyanta also looked love-lorn. It was she that suggested to Sakuntala the sending of a love-letter to Dushyanta. It was she that with a meaning

look at Anasuya said that a fawn was seeking its mother and must be helped to find it and thus enabled the lovers to meet. When Anasuya blames the king's forgetfulness, it is Priyamvada that defends him and says that a man of his nobility of presence cannot do wrong.

न तादृशा आकृतिविशेषा गुणविरोधिनो भवन्ति ।

This beautiful passage recalls Miranda's noble words about Ferdinand in Shakespeare's *Tempest*

“There is nothing ill can dwell in such temple :  
If the ill spirit have so fair an house,  
Good things will strive to dwell with it.”

When Anusuya expresses regret at Sakuntala's departure, Priyamvada says: “We shall somehow dispel our regret. Let her be happy.” She tells Sakuntala that not only are her friends in grief in view of her impending departure, but all Nature, animate and inanimate, in the hermitage is grief-stricken.

उगगलिअदम्भकबला मिइझो परिञ्चित्तणञ्चणा मोमोराओ ।

ओसरिअत्याण्डुपत्ता मुअन्ति अस्सूणि विअ वणलदाओ ॥

(The deer stand with unswallowed grass  
and the peacocks stand with neglected dance.

Even the creepers shed leaves and seem to shed tears of grief). On the other hand it is Anasuya that welcomes the king and replies to the king's question if their austerities were progressing (अपि तपो वर्धते). She replies that their austerities bore fruit by the coming of a noble guest and asks Sakuntala to go into the hermitage and bring fruits etc. for honouring the guest. The words with which she asks the king who he was and why he came show her learnedness and her refinement. It is she that narrates to the king the story of Sakuntala's birth and upbringing. When bashful Sakuutala tries to go away she tells her that it was not right to go away without showing due honour to a guest. When she finds Sakuntala pinning she tells her: "We do not know about love. But we find in you such signs of pining love as we have heard described in Itihasas." Again while Priyamvada merely asks the king to love Sakuntala and trusts to love to fulfil her destiny, Anusuya asks him to treat Sakuntala in a manner that would make her friend's hearts rejoice. Later it is she that proposes that worship should be offered to the deity who would confer wedded bliss on Sakuntala.

ननु सख्याः शकुन्तलायाः सौभाग्यदेवतार्चनीया

When Durvasas shouts in anger she sends the clever Priyamvada to pacify him and runs to fetch guest-offerings to him. It is needless to multiply instances. The characters are both clearly and delicately drawn and have the highest attractiveness.

To delineate Sakuntala's character adequately the task will occupy a volume by itself. All the peerless artistic gifts of Kalidasa have been lavished on such delineation. I can only indicate a few important aspects here. Sakuntala's heavenly beauty is suggested and expressed throughout the play. The king is struck with wonder and love at the very first sight and says that her loveliness shone all the greater from out of her dress of tree-bark rough and unlovely to behold. The poet has tressed the fact that she is the child of a heavenly damsel. The king says on learning this fact: "How can such a transcendental beauty be born of mortal parentage? Such a quivering radiance of beauty cannot arise from the earth." To him she seems to be a perfect picture endowed with life or a dream-creation

of the Creator's perfect mind rather than an ordinary woman. Her beauty is sweet like a fresh leaf and flower, glorious like a gem, sweet like new honey, and pure like heaven. When she goes to him apparelled like the day in the garments and jewels given by the forest gods, the residents of the palace wonder at her radiance. The king while averse to accepting her is struck by her loveliness and calls it अकिञ्चकान्ति natural and appropriate radiance.

Her noble qualities are no less wonderful than her loveliness of person.) She has both strength and sweetness of nature and her radiance of soul is no less remarkable than her radiance of external loveliness. She is unaware of her glory of form. "Though less of beauty, she was beauty's self" is a description that can be applied to her with perfect appropriateness. When she tells her friends that she is afraid of a cold reception they cry out: "You depreciate your excellence. Who will shut out with a cloth the thrilling radiance of the full moon?" Her innocence and simplicity and absolute trust win all hearts. In Shakespeare's *Tempest*—which is in many respects like *Sakuntala*—we find an equally

beautiful heroine, *Miranda*. Both have the same grace and delicacy and purity and sympathy and innocence. Both are brought up in a forest. Both are brought up amidst pure minds and lovely scenes. Both have a naturalness, a guilelessness, and an artless simplicity that are exceedingly attractive. But Kalidasa has invested his heroine with an even more wonderful charm than that with which *Miranda* has been invested by Shakespeare. He has given her a perfect sage as her guardian and has also given her two tender girl-companions as well. The hermitage is a more charming environment than the island. The absence of Caliban and of an incident like that of Caliban's attempted ravishment adds to the pure charm of the Indian play. Kalidasa is enabled by his scenes of *Sakuntala's* rejection and reunion to show the firmer and finer elements of her nature. Rabin-dranath Tagore says: "*Sakuntala's* simplicity is natural, that of *Miranda* is unnatural..... *Sakuntala's* simplicity was not girt round by ignorance as was the case with *Miranda*..... *Miranda's* simplicity was never subjected to such a fiery ordeal; it never clashed with knowledge of the world." This criticism seems to me to be

unjust to Shakespeare and to Miranda. Miranda's simplicity was as natural and innocent as that of Sakuntala. It was not ignorant at all as she was the pupil of Prospero. It did not undergo any fiery ordeal but the story did not include any such ordeal. I regard Sakuntala and Miranda as equally attractive. But Sakuntala combines the charm of Miranda and Perdita and the attractiveness of Imogen and Hermoine.

Thus Sakuntala's portraiture is of enrapturing loveliness. The picture of Sakuntala watering the creepers, pouting at the intrusive bee, looking bashfully at the king, pausing to look back at him with sidelong glances and half averted eyes while pretending to remove a thorn from her foot, writing her love letter to the king, chiding his embraces, bidding farewell to her father and her friends and her animate and inanimate playmates, standing at bay in the durbar hall, flying to heaven locked in her mother's arms, pining for her lord on the fields of felicity in heaven and reunited with him in bliss through their son are pictures that have become ineffaceable treasures of the national memory.

Her immediate response to the call of Dushyanta's love is natural and charming. She is not a sophisticated city-child and has no armour of defence. She is trustful like her loved fawn. At the same time, being the child of an ascetic and brought up in an ascetic's hermitage, she has moral strength and elevation and innate dignity and austere self-restraint. It has been well said that her love is, like a religion, holy, deep and true.

When we compare her with Urvashi and with Malavika, the poet's greatness in her delineation becomes clear all the more. Urvashi is a visitor from a supernatural sphere where life is all radiance and youth and pleasure. Malavika is innocent and pure but is a child of urban, nay, regal life and has all the accomplishments of culture. Sakuntala is a child of earth and heaven. She is pure and calm and holy like her hermitage and breathes holiness and loveliness on the sophisticated face of life. (Dushyanta is lifted by her into a higher region of life and love.)

Equally beautiful is her description in the play as a child of nature. She says that she loves the trees in the hermitage like her brothers (आस्ते मे सोदरस्नेह एतेषु). She calls her



beloved creeper Vanajyotsna (the moon beam of the forest) as her sister (लता भगिनी). She says that when she forgets them she would be forgetting herself (तदात्मानमपि विस्मरिष्यामि). She feels that the trees beckon to her with wind-tremulous fingers. The poet's delineation of the response of the forest gods in Act IV is charming to a degree. Her send-off by the matrons of the hermitage and by the sage Kanva is equally charming. And as she leaves her beloved fawn would not let her go. Through the cuckoo's voice the trees bid her God-speed. The fragrant South wind leads the way. Nowhere else in literature is there such a wooing or a winning, or a home-coming of such a bride. When she asks Kanva when she can come back to the scenes of her youth, he tells her:—"After being the queen of ocean-girdled earth and placing your son on the foeless universal throne, you shall with your lord step into this radiant peace again."

We can well imagine how pure and precious was and would have been the love-emotion of such a nature. Kalidasa has spent even more of his genius on this aspect than on her beauty or her mental graces or her surroundings. (Her love is as sudden as it is pure.) The descriptions of her bashfulness in conflict with her longing





are very attractive. Kalidasa's expertness in describing the physical manifestations of love is shown at its best in his description of *Sakuntala's* love. Her love letter is frank and charming in expression. After her lord goes away she is lost in thoughts of love and is unaware of the coming or the curse of the sage Durvasas. Her love fills her entire soul.

It is such a love that is tested in the fierce fire of grief. In the durbar hall she bears with dignity the taunts showered on her by the king and by her male guides. The pure gold of her nature shone out all the more in that fierce conflagration of angry thoughts and words. She pleads her cause with skill and power but when she fails she goes out not with cries or curses but with a quiet and resigned upbraiding of her ill fortune. Who but her mother could comfort and console her then?

Then she is taken to heaven by her loving mother. She there regains her composure but her heart was left behind with her lord. In describing her in separation Kalidasa takes many hints from his admired exemplar Valmiki. He describes her as एकवेणीधरा, a word taken from the *Ramayana*. He says:—

“वसने परिधूसेरे वसाना नियमक्षाममुखी धृतैकवेणिः ॥

These words recall the famous stanza in the Ramayana.

एकवेणीधरा क्षीणा भर्तृचिन्तापरायणा ।

अधःशय्या विवर्णाङ्गी पद्मिनीव हिमायये ॥

Sakuntala tells her lord that it was her ill-luck that turned his love into bitterness. She is grateful to relenting heaven for her returned happiness. Even at the last moment her bashfulness and simplicity are apparent. When the king asks her to go with him to get the blessings of the sage Maricha, she says that she is overpowered by bashfulness to go in the presence of elders in the company of her lord. Then they go to the sage and receive his blessings for themselves and their son Bharata and their land which was to be ruled by Bharata and to get its name from his holy name. We may well imagine how she carried the influence and atmosphere of hermitage and heaven into the court and made ordinary life a holiness and a blessing and a rapture and a sacrament. Rightly does Goethe say:—

“Wouldst thou the earth and heaven in one sole name combine?

I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said.”

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## CHAPTER XV.

### Kalidasa's Miscellaneous Works.

**T**O Kalidasa are attributed many miscellaneous works but scholarship has pronounced clearly in favour of only a few of them. It is not necessary or possible to go into the genuineness or otherwise of each of these works here. The works are *Srutabodha*, *Sringaratilaka*, *Sringararasashtaka*, *Setukavya*, *Karpuramanjari*, *Pushpabanavilasa*, *Syamaladandaka*, *Prasnottaramala* and *Jyotirvidabharana*. Critics have differed as to which of these are to be finally rejected as not belonging to Kalidasa, but almost all of these works have been doubted by one critic or another. The *Rakshasa Kavya* and *Nalodaya* also are attributed to him. Rajasekhara in his *Kavyamimamsa* refers to a work on Poetries by Kalidasa. Such a work is not now extant.

The *Sringaratilaka* is attributed to Kalidasa. We have no means of deciding

whether it is his work or not though it is easy on a *priori* grounds of style and thought to assert or deny in such a matter. It contains fine conceits expressed in a graceful style. One verse compares the body of the beloved to a tank designed for allaying the fire of the lover's heart. Another asks why her heart alone should be of stone while all else about her is soft. Another verse induces her to come into the lover's house lest at the time of the eclipse her face be mistaken for the full moon. Another says that love is the best medicine for all the ills of life. Another laments that jealous fate forbids the lover even a vision of sights some what like his beloved; the blue lotus-flower resembling her eyes is immersed in water and the moon which is like her face is hidden by clouds and the swans whose gait is like hers have flown away. Another verse asks Rohini (the star-goddess who is the wife of the Moon-God) to chide her lord who seeks to look at the beloved and touch her with his beams. Other verses ask the beloved to return the rejected kisses and embraces to the lover and to punish him with her arrow-glances. We find also some verses which are not in good taste. One verse declares that true moksha (liberation) is not the attain-

ment of a state beyond *gunas* and above pleasure and pain but the untying of the tied garment of a lovely maiden.

अविदितसुखदुःखं निर्गुणं वस्तु किञ्चि-

जडमतिरिह कश्चिन्मोक्ष इत्याचक्षे ।

मम तु मतमनङ्गस्मेरतारुण्यघूर्ण-

न्मदकलमदिराक्षीनीविमोक्षो हि मोक्षः ॥

Equally attractive but equally unequal in poetic intent and achievement is *Pushpabana-vilasa*. Kalidasa's authorship of it also is a subject of doubt. It refers to Krishna as a lover of the flute and the chief of all lovers वेणुनादरसिक and जाराग्रणीः. It presents vignettes of many situations of love. I may however refer to two verses which attain a more than ordinary level of artistic expression of fine feeling. One verse says that a lover bent on travel stopped his trip because he saw a series of unusual phenomena viz, the Moon (her face) resting on the lotus (her hand), pearls (tears) coming out of blue lotuses (her eyes), paleness overtaking a golden creeper (her body) and the fading of fresh flower-garlands by the touch of lotus buds (her breasts).



शेते शीतकराम्बुजे कुवलयद्वन्द्वाद्विनिर्गच्छति  
 स्वच्छा मीत्तिकसंहतिर्धवलमा हैमीं लतामञ्जति ।  
 स्पर्शात्पङ्कजकोशयोरभिनवा यान्ति स्रजः क्लान्तता-  
 मेषोत्पातपरंपरा मम सखे यात्रास्पृहां कृन्तति ॥

Another verse declares that if the beloved sings the Vina sounds harsh, that if she smiles a sudden darkness overtakes the moonlight, that in front of her eyes the blue lotus flower looks faded and that if the beauty of her body is seen the lightning loses its glow.

तन्वी सा यदि गायति श्रुतिकदुर्वीणाध्वनिर्जायते  
 यद्यापिष्कुरुते स्मितानि मलिनैवालक्ष्यते चन्द्रिका ।  
 आस्ते म्लानमिवोत्पलं नवमपि स्याच्चेत्पुरो नेत्रयो-  
 स्तस्याः श्रीरवलोक्यते यदि तडिद्वल्ली विवर्णेव सा ॥

*Nalodaya* is a poem in four cantos and describes the restoration of Nala to his lost throne. Kalidasa's authorship of it does not seem to be true. It does not contain any of his characteristic traits and excellences. It tries to show off much skill in composing verses in numerous and artificial and complicated metres and introduces end-rhymes and middle-rhymes, and is in the most unnatural and modern Kavya style. The epic note which is so finely prominent in the story of Nala is hardly heard

amid the medley of elaborate conceits and descriptions and tropes. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar has shown that in some of the manuscripts of the poem the author is stated to be Ravideva the son of Narayana. The authenticity of *Rikshasakavya*, *Setukavya*, *Karpooramanjari*, *Prasnottaramala* and *Jyotirvidabharana* is equally doubtful. They do not contain his characteristic touches at all.

*Srutabodha* is a simple manual of metres and is of no special merit. *Sringararasashtakam* is a small and attractive poem but there is no special distinction of thought or style in that.

But *Syamala-Dandaka* which is a rhythmical prose-poem on the Goddess Syamala, an aspect of Devi, is in his richest and happiest vein and is of undoubted and unassailable authenticity. It is one of the favourite poems of India and the introductory stanzas have become a cherished possession of the national mind.

माणिक्यवीणामुपललयन्तीं मदालसां मञ्जुलवाग्विलासाम् ।

माहेन्द्रनीलद्युतिकोमलङ्गीं मातङ्गकन्यां मनसा स्मरामि ॥

चतुर्भुजे चन्द्रकलावतंसे कुचोन्नते कुङ्कुमरागशोणे ।

पुण्ड्रेक्षुपाशङ्कुशपुष्पबाणहस्ते नमस्ते जगदेकमातः ॥







## CHAPTER XVI.

### Kalidasa's Successors

**I**T is an interesting task to trace the continuous and ever-growing influence of Kalidasa on his successors. During the last two thousand years generations of poets and of other men have studied his works with delight and have been influenced by him. A well-known Sanskrit stanza says :—

पुरा कवीनां गणनाप्रसङ्गे कनिष्ठिकाधिष्ठितकालिदासा ।

अद्यापि तत्तुल्यकेवरभावात् अनामिका सार्थवती बभूव ॥

(Formerly in counting the poets, the little finger was bent after naming Kalidasa. As no other poet equal to him has existed, the next finger which is called the nameless 'Anamika' was rightly so named.)

Kalidasa lived at a time when the Sanskrit language, though it was not spoken widely by

Large classes of people, was easily understood if it was written and spoken in a simple and natural and idiomatic manner. It seems to me that the dramas of Kalidasian and pre-Kalidasian days were not mere study-room plays but were enacted with all the resources of art and were appreciated and admired by cultured audiences. That was the reason why the Sanskrit prose therein was so pure and limpid and graceful. To appeal to the audience it had to be simple and sweet and attractive in expression and beautiful and striking and original in thought and so it was. The poetry also aimed at popular study and appreciation and was not written by a Pandit for forcing the admiration of unwilling and jealous compeers. But in later times Sanskrit became less and less of a living tongue though in respect of the religious life of the land it has been and is and will be and must be an eternally existing means of study and expression. The result was that prose and verse composition got into the hands of literary coteries and lost their popular note and appeal and became conventional, wooden and stilted and even bizarre and overloaded with unnatural concepts. Hence the influence of Kalidasa is

hardly traceable in later Sanskrit prose. Even, in later Sanskrit poetry his influence was more in the realm of ideas than in the region of style.

But his influence is clearly seen in one form or other over his successors. I have stated above what I consider to be Asvaghosha's debt to Kalidasa. King Kumaradasa's *Janakiharana* is full of echoes from Kalidasa's poems. A well-known verse says in regard to his *Janakiharana*.

जानकीहरणं कर्तुं रघुवंशे महत्यपि ।

कविः कुमारदासश्च रावणश्च यदि क्षमः ॥

The innumerable *Sandesakavyas* down to Dhoyika's *Pavanaduta* (12th century), Desika's *Hamsasandesa* and even later poems such as *Kokilasandesa*, *Pikasandesa*, *Manas-Sandesa* etc., were modelled on Kalidasa's *Meghasandesa*. Bhavabhuti seems to refer to it in his well-known verse कश्चित्सौम्य प्रियसहचरी विद्युदालिङ्गति...in *Malati-madhava*. His works bear many traces of Kalidasa's influence. Kalidasa's *Kumara-sambhava* was the source of Bana's fine drama entitled *Parvatiparinaya*. His *Raghuvamsa* inspired Desika's great poem entitled *Yadava-bhyudayam*. His *Malavikagnimitra* evidently

inspired the composition of the similar and parallel dramas of *Ratnavali* and *Priyadarsika* by Sri Harsha and also Bilhana's *Karnasundari*. I do not think that the theory that the plays of Sri Harsha were anterior to Kalidasa's time is correct at all. *Malavikagnimitra* is valuable also as being the forerunner and inspirer of the few later historical plays in Sanskrit literature. His *Vikramorvasiya* suggested the theme and the ideas for some later works such as *Unmattaraghava*. Though *Sakuntala* was so wonderful and unique and well-known and popular that no one dared to borrow ideas and suggestions from it, yet its influence has been of an all-pervasive character. The later treatment of nature and beauty and love has always borne the impress of Kalidasa's genius. The descriptions of natural beauty and feminine grace by Kalidasa have fixed the standard of poetic taste in India. So far as his descriptions of the amatory passion are concerned, they have a delicacy and a refinement and a subtlety, which are supreme in truth and beauty and it has always been the aim and object of later poets to bring out similar ideas in beautiful verse without any loss of originality of thought or utterance.



When vernacular poetry became a thing of power and beauty in the various vernaculars of India, the three Sanskrit poets whose influence was most widely felt by the poets in the vernaculars were Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa. Kalidasa's works have been translated before and in recent times into the vernaculars of India and have always exercised a compulsive fascination and have been a source of inspiration. If any proof were needed as to how even to-day he is a living force in vernacular poetry, I need only mention the poesy of Rabindranath Tagore. I have already referred to Tagore's great poem on *Urvashi* and the obvious inspiration for its composition. Throughout Tagore's poems we find Kalidasa's influence as much as the influence of Upanishadic poetry and the poetry of Vidyapathi and Chandidas and Kabir. Tagore's expositions of the significance of *Kumarasambhava* and *Sakuntala*, to which I have referred above, are not only valuable in themselves but are also significant as showing the fascination, exercised on Tagore by the genius of Kalidasa.

Last but not least must be mentioned Kalidasa's influence on the west. I have

already referred to Goethe's famous stanza on Sakuntala and to the encomiums of Baron Humboldt and Sir Monier Williams and Professor Lassen and others. Professor Lassen calls him as " the brightest star in the firmament of Indian poetry ". Sylvain Levi's *Le Theatre Indian* contains a just and true and beautiful description of Kalidasa's greatness and influence. When the storm and the stress of the modern age are over and the world returns once again to sweetness and sanity and spirituality, Kalidasa's influence is bound to become more and more. In respect of him and his genius we may well affirm, in the words of Swami Vivekananda about the Indian genius that " like the dew that falls unseen but bring into blossom the fairest of roses, such has been the contribution of Kalidasa to the world." In short to quote from two well-known Sanskrit verses, his poetry is full of sweetness (मधुरसान्द्रासु) and he is the gracefulness of the Goddess of poesy (कालिदासो विलासः).





